# ARTICULATING EAST ASIA
# INTER-ASIAN PACKAGING OF TAIWANESE IDOL DRAMA IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

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# ARTICULATING EAST ASIA: INTER-ASIAN PACKAGING OF TAIWANESE IDOL DRAMA IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

**by**

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Dedicated to the Taiwanese TV drama workers battling the consequences of the neo-liberal deregulation of Taiwanese TV market.

## Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the product of my own work. The thesis has not been previously accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Yi-Hsuan Lai

London, UK, 25th September 2016

## Copyright Declaration

## Abstract

This thesis explores the inter-Asian operations of Taiwanese “idol drama” – star-centred TV drama set in the twenty-first-century Taiwan, targeting female audiences. It examines how the industry has developed international, multilateral co-operation relationships after the neo-liberal deregulation in its domestic market. Theoretically, it accounts for the cultural politics (of regional and Taiwanese representation) in the production aspect by examining different regional production strategies in the industry.

I propose to view idol drama as a medium subject to three dominant, pedagogical and oppressive value systems (post-colonial nationalist, patriarchal, and capitalist/commercial) in Taiwan and other East Asian countries. The scattered dominant value systems, which resemble, yet contradict each other in different aspects, form the context where idol drama operates. To analyse these operations and their imaginations, I modify Stuart Hall’s concept of (mediated) articulation into the Taiwanese context. I contextualise idol drama from the perspective of Taiwan’s political economy and its TV market, especially political democratisation, yet with polemic contestation of Sino-centrism and Taiwan-centrism, media deregulation within a fragmented domestic market in a time of globalisation. Regionalised viewing of TV drama in East Asian markets will also be assessed.

The initial section looks into how different Taiwanese idol drama producers “package” different East Asian elements to appeal to both domestic and international markets. The second part analyses four inter-Asian packaging strategies in terms of their struggles for legitimacy and contestations surrounding the productions. The last part examines the mediated articulations of Taiwanese subjectivity with the patriarchal nationalist forces of its stronger neighbours in East Asia. Different articulations about Taiwanese identity, with social and gender values in the forefront and national relations in the background, have been mediated in this inter-Asian packaging to form a multi-faceted system of images that together represent the Taiwanese economic and cultural relations with other East Asian countries.

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# Abbreviations

| Abbreviation | Meaning |
|---|---|
| ANN | All-Nippon News Network |
| ASEAN | The Association of Southeast Asian Nations |
| CAJ | Creative Artist Japan |
| CCP | Chinese Communist Party |
| CCTV | China Central TV Station |
| CNN | Cable News Network |
| CTI | Chung Tian Satellite TV Station |
| CTS | Chinese Television System |
| CTV | China Television Company |
| DPP | Democratic Progressive Party |
| EBS | Educational Broadcasting System |
| ECFA | Economic Co-operation Framework Agreement |
| FTS | Fuji Television System |
| FTV | Formosa Television Inc. |
| GIO | Government Information Office |
| GTV | Gala TV Station |
| HBO | Home Box Office Inc. |
| JET | Japanese Entertainment Television |
| JNN | Japan News Network |
| KBS | Korean Broadcasting System |
| KMT | Kuomintang, Chinese Nationalist Party |
| MBC | Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation |
| NCC | National Communications Commission |
| NHK | Nippon Hoso Kyokai (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) |
| NNS | Nippon Television Network System |
| NTV | Nippon Television Network Corporation |
| PRC | People's Republic of China |
| PTS | Public Television Service |
| ROC | Republic of China |
| SARFT | State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television |
| SBS | Seoul Broadcasting System |
| SET | Sanlih Entertainment Television Company |
| TBS | Taiwan Broadcasting System |
| TBS | Tokyo Broadcasting System |
| TTV | Taiwan Television Company |
| TVBS | Television Broadcasts Satellite TV |
| TXN | TV Tokyo Network |
| UK | The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland |
| US | The United States of America |
| USSR | The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics |
| USTR | The United States Trade Representative |
| WTO | The World Trade Organisation |

## Note on Romanisation

East Asian researchers are referred to using the Western convention: first names come before family names. Names of East Asian figures, mainly politicians, media celebrities, stars, TV drama workers and drama characters, are presented according to the East Asian naming convention with their family names coming before their first names. Where these names have an established conventional spelling in English, I have retained the spelling. When the East Asian figures have adopted English names that have been commonly referred to in English-speaking world, I will use their English names. Otherwise, I have adopted standardised forms of Romanisation for all East Asian languages that do not normally use Roman script.

As Taiwanese people usually romanise their names with *Wade-Giles Romanisation system* while people of People's Republic of China romanise their names with *Hanyu Pinyin Romanisation system*, it is more natural, respectful and politically correct to transliterate names in the thesis in their own conventions. Names of drama characters will be romanised mainly according to their Mandarin pronunciation with the same principle, which also applies to the transliteration of names of authors of non-English sources from Taiwan and PRC.

For Japanese and South Korean characters in the dramas, I will identify their names in their languages. If I cannot identify the Japanese and Korean names, I will use and romanise their Mandarin names with *Wade-Giles Romanisation System*. The original terms of all these East Asian names will be provided in Appendix A: Glossary.

The transliteration system for Chinese words, such as 偶像劇 (ouxiangju) used in this thesis is *Hanyu Pinyin*. *Hanyu Pinyin* is also used to transliterate headings and titles of non-English sources in the bibliography.

## New Taiwan Dollar Converted to British Pound

Figures in the New Taiwan Dollar, such as drama production fees, are converted to British Pounds at the exchange rate of 1 New Taiwan Dollar to 0.02 British Pounds, as in 2015.

# Chapter 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Research Questions

Since the end of the Cold War and the beginning of neo-liberal global/regional media flow in the early 1990s, East Asia has witnessed the popularity of TV dramas made in the region among female audiences, such as Japanese and South Korean TV dramas (Iwabuchi, 2004a; Chua and Iwabuchi, 2008). This popularity seems to have reduced the influence of American media within the region (Iwabuchi, 2004b, pp.4-5). After decades of importation and consumption of foreign media culture (especially from America and Japan), since the early 2000s, the Taiwanese TV drama industry has created its own star-centred commercial urban dramas, locally coined as "*ouxiangju*", which literally translates as "idol drama". The idol drama from Taiwan has attracted regional female audiences and has grown rapidly in the twenty-first-century Taiwanese TV production industry (Ida, 2008; Zhu, 2008, pp.90-91; Deppman, 2009; Heryanto, 2010; F.-c. I. Yang, 2013). It generally runs 13 to 20 episodes of 70 minutes each, excluding commercial time, and specialises in romantic love stories. It is circulated in the East Asian drama markets, targeting the region's female audiences (initially teens and early twenties, then teens to forties) (Kao, 2004, p.164, p.185; Feng, 2006 cited in M.-J. Lin, 2006b, p.41; Wu and Jiang, 2010a, p.9; Wang, 2016). The dramas have not only catered for Chinese-speaking audiences but also reached non-Chinese-speaking East Asian audiences. Thus, this drama can be broadly understood as a commercial female genre operating at regional level.

Inasmuch as the consumption of idol drama is regionalised in this laissez-faire manner, so is its production. As I will analyse in the thesis, the success of idol drama *Meteor Garden* (2001) created a regional network of resources so that Taiwanese TV production companies have tried to take advantage of this, experimenting with "production regionalisation". Taking a flexible and even opportunistic approach of regional, or more precisely, "inter-Asian" operation, different Taiwanese idol drama producers "package" different East Asian elements to produce TV dramas. For example, *Meteor Garden*'s producer Angie Chai has integrated East Asian markets and sold dramas to the dealers or TV stations in East Asia (2004 cited in Liang, 2004, p.208; Liang, 2010). Virginia Liu, another idol drama producer, identifies her company as a show-business brand with "bases in Taiwan, aiming at all entertainment-related business in (East) Asia, to ultimately

worldwide".[1] Liu says that since she runs an independent company, her work is quite borderless and she must go out to make contacts with business in many countries (personal communication, March 26, 2013). Meanwhile, the producer Tsai Yueh-Hsun, who announced "New Asian projects of Chinese-language film and television" (Wang, 2012; C.-W. Wu, 2012), suggested that Taiwanese TV dramas should produce more inclusive imaginations that do not "speak from a particular social historical position" (Tsai, 2012). Similarly, Gala TV, a Taiwanese satellite TV company that has produced TV dramas adapting Japanese manga (Japanese comics), believes that its regionally-oriented products would act as an open container housing different regionally popular elements (Hsiao, 2012). The aforementioned producers have formed a variety of international production relations with non-Taiwanese media companies from the PRC (People's Republic of China), Japan and South Korea.

TV is usually considered a national medium. Its production and content are conventionally national, having a national setting, presuming a national audience, and circulating mainly in a country (Caughie, 2000). TV programmes from strong media production systems would enjoy international circulation, such as the US, Japan, Hong Kong and Egypt, but their contents are predominantly domestic productions (Fiske, 1987; MacDonald, 1990; Ma, 1999; Tsai, 2002; Abu-Lughod, 2004; Lukacs, 2010). For post-colonial nation-states, TV programmes are an important tool for social development and the production of modern national citizens (Abu-Lughod, 2004). Considering the prevailing presumption of TV as a national medium, the international operation or, more precisely, inter-Asian packaging of the Taiwanese TV drama industry mentioned above is problematic. Taiwan is a relatively small country that has a population of around 23 million people. But it has opened up its domestic TV market for foreign imports in a neo-liberal deregulation since 1993 disregarding the fact that it has not had a strong media industry, and has situated near far more influential countries such as the PRC, Japan and South Korea, which have had more established media systems (Feng, 1995, pp.31-65). By neo-liberal media deregulation, I refer to the Taiwanese government's opening of TV business to foreign media and free import of foreign content under pressure from US media enterprises and government who were advocates of neo-liberal global free flow of goods, according to David Harvey (2005), and the Taiwanese taking of the neo-liberalism discourse concerning potential benefits of free market

[1] Available at: http://www.pgestar.com/about.php [Accessed 6 October 2015].

media system to its media and society (Chang, 1994; Feng, 1995; 2007). Under such circumstance, the inter-Asian packaged idol dramas have created multilateral transnational production linkages, as I will introduce in the thesis. In terms of drama content, a number of them have non-Taiwanese elements (such as settings, actors, characters), while producing stories depicting contemporary urban lives in Taiwan, the region and beyond.

The above phenomenon triggered my research questions that can be summarised as follows:

1. Where are idol drama's markets in East Asia and how has the industry competed in the markets?
2. What kinds of regional creative strategies have idol dramas implemented? What are their advantages and limitations? How have the strategies been considered in Taiwan and in the industry? Which strategies have worked successfully, in commercial or cultural senses?
3. How have the idol dramas imagined Taiwan in relation to different East Asian countries, such as the PRC, Japan and South Korea? How should we assess the imaginations? What kinds of inter-Asian articulations concerning shared values and national relations have been mediated in these idol dramas?

These questions focus on the practices of drama workers as signifying agents and outcomes of their mediations that are situated in highly laissez-faire contexts/conditions. Briefly mentioning here, I will answer them by taking on the study of media in cultural studies that has focused on questions of context and mediation. I will contextualise inter-Asian packaging of Taiwanese idol drama from the perspective of the political economy of Taiwan and its TV market, in particular political democratisation, yet with polemic contestation of Sino-centrism and Taiwan-centrism, and media deregulation with market fragmentation and multiple channels full of legally circulated foreign imports in a time of neo-liberal globalisation. I will then examine how Taiwanese idol drama producers co-operate with non-Taiwanese media industries, "package" different East Asian elements, and articulate Taiwanese value systems and those of their foreign co-operators in their works, since neo-liberal global and regional media flow became an irreversible trend.

## 1.2 Significance of the Research

This contextually informed analysis of idol drama's inter-Asian packaging and articulation would contribute to academia in media studies. Empirically, the thesis explores how idol drama as a female-oriented TV industry has developed a variety of international co-operation relationships,

in the neo-liberal deregulated environment. It asks question about how the female-oriented industry from a comparatively small yet politically contested Taiwan has sustained itself regionally after the deregulation in its domestic TV market. Regionally-made audio-visual products and narratives are not new in East Asia. For instance, since the mid-twentieth century, Hong Kong film industry has been producing export-oriented films and has developed its own unique inter-Asian film-making as well as cross-cultural style of storytelling (Yeh and Davis, 2002). But such strategy has been considered difficult for its time-consuming negotiations and scripting for different national talents by Peter Ho-Sun Chan, a Hong Kong film-maker who actively conducted the strategy during the early 2000s and later seemed to have given it up (Yeh, 2010b). He even commented that inter-Asian audio-visual productions hardly operate on a long-term basis and thus are relatively rare (Lo, 2005, p.142). In this light, inter-Asian packaging at regional-scale operation is a contingent yet controversial strategy, in opposition to the production strategy that mainly focuses on the Taiwanese domestic TV drama market which I call “commercial localism”. How Taiwanese idol drama has been doing in their inter-Asian packaging and operating at regional scale is an interesting question to both industrial and academic experts.

Theoretically, the thesis offers an account of the cultural politics (of the regional and Taiwanese representation) in the production aspect of idol drama in an era of neo-liberal globalisation. It does so by examining different regional production strategies in the industry, arguments surrounding them and their efforts to obtain legitimacy. As I will discuss later in the thesis, Taiwanese society in the 1990s experienced the decline of Sino-centric KMT (Kuomintang, also known as Chinese Nationalist Party) authoritarian rule that was replaced with political contestation between Sino-centric nationalism and Taiwan-centric nationalism. After the end of the KMT authoritarian rule, Taiwanese TV business was no longer oligopolised by TV stations controlled by the KMT government. New TV stations and the free trade of foreign TV dramas have created a fragmented market of TV consumption since 1993 (Feng, 1995, pp.31-65; Curtin, 2007, pp.151-175).

Fragmentation has also appeared in TV drama production, as will be illustrated later. In order to compete in the domestic market, several Taiwanese production companies, who have their own strategies and production preferences, have actively sought and articulated specific foreign partners in their inter-Asian operations, such as Taiwanese-PRC, Taiwanese-Japanese, Taiwanese-Korean co-operations, etc. The Taiwanese production companies compete in the

market for audiences with their own production strategies and the foreign partners. The foreign partners are “allies” in the sense that they share similar ideas on drama discourse and values so that they can co-operate with specific Taiwanese idol drama production companies. By accommodating the foreign allying partners – a practice that is not without friction and constraint – the Taiwanese producers attempt to survive in and contribute to the heterogeneity and contestation in this field. Their inter-Asian dramas articulate the value systems of the countries where their allies are from, and actively bring these values into the field of Taiwanese idol drama making. Consequently, these inter-Asian dramas (alongside their foreign allies) have competed with each other, providing different social values and political ideas in their competition for audiences.

The topic of cultural politics constitutes an important theme for critical media and cultural studies. In the thesis, a scene will be analysed in which the cultural politics in the inter-Asian idol drama industry are not only domestic, but also international and multilateral. The cultural politics surrounding idol drama’s packaging take place in the competition between Taiwanese TV drama production companies in the neo-liberal yet fragmented Taiwanese TV industry. As the companies are linked to various co-operators in East Asia, their cultural politics is international. It is also multilateral as the inter-Asian packaging of Taiwanese idol drama engages many countries; one idol drama would engage one or two foreign co-operator(s). Previous researches on the co-operation of either film or TV tended to specifically focus on the latter, e.g. a specific Taiwanese film/TV drama that has a bilateral dimension between Taiwan and mainland China or between Taiwan and Japan (Shih, 1995; 1998; Curtin, 2007, pp.133-150; Feng, 2007; S. C. Wang, 2009; Chang, 2010; Yeh, 2010a). They have failed to provide a broader account of the multilaterality/multilateralism of Taiwanese international engagements in a multi-polar world.

Furthermore, this thesis will examine the representations of Taiwanese and the region in idol drama that targets female audiences and it does so with an awareness of the multilaterality/multilateralism mentioned above. The idol dramas have included nationally different East Asian characters that interact with the Taiwanese on screen. The interactions are multilateral: for example, mainland Chinese residents whose houses are being knocked down by the company of a Taiwanese businessman; a young mainland Chinese man marrying a Taiwanese woman; a Japanese girl coming to Taiwan to find her Taiwanese mother; a top Japanese star who interacts with stars of Taiwanese idol drama; a South Korean woman and a young Hong Kong man who

make a living in Taiwan; a female South Korean film-maker being in a love relationship with a Taiwanese man; a South Korean film director making a film in Taiwan, etc. Such imaginations of Taiwan in relation to particular neighbours become "inter-Asian", constructing different symbolic discourses on Taiwanese identity within this dynamic region, in an era of globalisation.

In the discipline of media and cultural studies, media representation is a key theme. Analysing the depiction of Taiwanese and East Asian individuals in idol dramas is important for studies on Taiwanese national and cultural identities, since Taiwanese national and cultural identification is under much contestation between three nationalist political groups in mainland China and Taiwan, which will be introduced in the following section of the current chapter. Mark Harrison (2009, p.52) notes that "the Taiwanese write their history with geo-politics". Representation of inter-Asian interactions is not a new concept for contemporary Taiwanese writers and film-makers, as its history has been related to the movements of its stronger neighbours and conquering outsiders, especially mainland Chinese, Japanese, and, more historically distant, the Dutch and Spanish. As the contemporary world is characterised by the central position of image products, especially film and TV, in the formation of cultural identities (Hall, 1991a, p.27), the dramas' depictions of both contemporary Taiwanese and East Asian characters may shape and affirm the identities and values of their audiences in a certain way. But different audio-visual medium platforms have their own narrative traditions and political, economic and ideologically value-laden creative conditions. For example, Taiwan New Cinema constructed the geo-political history in a realistic fashion (Yip, 2004; Berry and Lu, 2005; Yeh and Davis, 2005; Davis and Chen, 2007; Lin and Sang, 2012; Tweedie, 2013; Lupke, 2016). Its film-makers struggled to express themselves in an authoritarian, Sino-centric regime before, during and after the 1990s. Because of their loyalty to personal authorship, they have survived mainly in the minor art houses as well as international film festivals and have had a limited audience base that respects and appreciates their say (Berry and Lu, 2005, p.5).[2] The US-based Taiwanese feminist

[2] These films, which circulate in minor non-commercial international filmic networks such as festivals and art houses, are different from idol dramas because of, firstly, their commitment to self-expression and, secondly, their observational realism based on directors' personal memories. The directors drew on their own personal memories and ethnic backgrounds for film-making and together they established a signature historically realistic film style that indirectly echoed and encouraged the larger Taiwanese cultural localisation movement. The cinemas centred on the subalterns in the ethnically heterogeneous Taiwanese society, and mainly on the three largest ethnic groups, Mainlanders (*waishengren*), Hoklo people and Hakka people. Although the Taiwan New Cinemas achieved critical success in the 1980s and 1990s, the directors mainly made films that addressed their own personal memories and socio-ethnic backgrounds and visioned Taiwan through their eyes. Their films nonetheless overlooked more subalterns, such as homosexuality and indigenous people (Chiu, 2007, p.18). These film directors, who had strong commitment to their own expression concerning subjects' micro experiences impacted by the macro historical transition in Taiwan, cared less about the market return of their films.

scholar Shu-mei Shih (2003, p.146) once commented that, in an age of globalisation, the multicultural Taiwanese individuals can take advantage of the global network for their own purposes. If the Taiwan New Cinema has raised funds internationally, another cultural production system may also make use of overseas circulation, such as the idol dramas that target the East Asian female audience.

In contrast to the Taiwan New Cinema, idol dramas address a mainly female audience in Taiwan and East Asia, using a commercial logic (Deppman, 2009; F.-c. I. Yang, 2013, pp.1073-1075). Their constructions of the geo-political and cultural realities of contemporary Taiwanese society deserve attention and critical analysis from both cultural and gender viewpoints because they would have an invisible influence on the targeted East Asian female audience who can associate with and relate to the constructions and may affect the regional socio-cultural identifications of the audience. In this thesis, I will argue that the idol drama industrial workers articulate the mainstream ideas and value systems of the countries where their allies are from and those of Taiwan in the inter-Asian representations of the idol drama.

## 1.3 A Brief History of Taiwan and Taiwanese TV

### 1.3.1 Taiwanese Political Economic History

A brief detour to the complex histories of Taiwanese politics of identities and neo-liberal deregulation of its TV industry is necessary here since they constitute the political, economic and social cultural contexts and production conditions of idol drama. Taiwan has been "on civilisation's edge" but significant in the maritime exploration of much stronger global and regional powers (mainland China, Japan and US), as an island located on the Pacific Ocean south east of the Chinese mainland (Yeh and Davis, 2005, p.4; M.-C. Tsai, 2010). Its numerous ethnic inhabitants consequently have been influenced by the much stronger neighbouring and foreign forces (Roy, 2003; M.-C. Tsai, 2010; Wakabayashi, 2014). These inhabitants have also formed complex ethnically dominating relations with each other: indigenous people have been dominated by Hoklo

In the 1980s, the smaller-budget films were supported by state-owned film studios that tolerated/encouraged diversity in film-making. This is not to say that they never had domestic commercial success. The Taiwan New Cinemas came at the time of the political democratisation in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The broadly defined political and male-oriented films created a few commercial successes. In the late 1980s, their works received international acclaim from European film festivals, and their target audiences shifted to global critical audiences cultivated in the international art-house and film festivals. But throughout the 1990s these political expressions had little commercial success in the Taiwanese domestic film market. The directors were also criticised for failing to attract the general audience. Commercial failure of the cinemas in Taiwanese box office was paradoxical in view of its international acclaim (Davis, 2007, p.8).

and Hakka people who arrived in Taiwan from south eastern Chinese prefectures hundred years; all together, they experienced Imperial Japanese colonial domination during 1895 and 1945 and later were ruled by the authoritarian Sino-centric KMT (Chinese Nationalist Party) during 1945 and 2000 (Chun, 1996; 2000; 2002; Kuo, 2003; Wang, 2004; Ngo and Wang, 2011; Wakabayashi, 2014, pp.388-402).

Since 1945, Taiwan was governed by the KMT that founded the Republic of China (ROC), the official name for Taiwan, when the KMT was still based on mainland China. The KMT was politically competing against the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) that founded the People's Republic of China (PRC). The KMT lost in the Chinese Civil War and moved its base to Taiwan in 1949. After the outbreak of Korean War, the KMT has been protected by US and it has been pro-American and ideologically opposed to the CCP's PRC (Roy, 2003; Wakabayashi, 2014, pp.64-92). The KMT was Sino-centric Chinese nationalistic, maintaining it being the protector of Chinese traditional Confucian culture so as to claim it being the legitimate Chinese regime (Chun, 1996; 2000). The KMT brought with it a suppressive authoritarian rule to Taiwan, controlling this society and regulating media forcefully with martial law during 1949 and 1987 when the world experienced the Cold War (1947-1991) (Lee, 2000, p.125). Culturally, the KMT re-Sinicised the post-colonial Taiwanese people and promoted Chinese nationalism with which it oriented Taiwanese national identity (Chun, 1996; 2000). It favoured "mainlanders" or "*waishengren*" (literally meaning "people from outside Taiwan Province") to "*benshengren*" (literally meaning "people based in the Taiwan Province", and ethnically referring to Hoklo and Hakka people who just experienced 50-year Japanese colonial rule) (Ngo and Wang, 2011, p.3; Wakabayashi, 2014, p.95).[3]

However, after the ROC ruled by the KMT lost the right to represent China to the PRC in the United Nations in 1971 as well as US's official diplomatic relationship in 1979, the 1980s saw not only the rise of cultural localisation (cultural de-Sinicisation) but also political democratisation movements that asked for lifting martial law in Taiwan (Chun, 2000; A.-c. Hsiao, 2000; Roy, 2003). Interaction with the world, especially the US-centred West, is believed to be an important factor

[3] Its population policy was not localised, as if it were to return to the mainland quickly. Those who moved from the mainland with the KMT kept their own mainland provincial identities and later were identified as "*waishengren*" in total. Those who had inhabited Taiwan were governed by the Taiwan Provincial government and gradually have been identified as "*benshengren*" (Ngo and Wang, 2011, p.3; Wakabayashi, 2014, p.95).

in the Taiwanese nation-building movement (H.-l. Wang, 2000; 2002; 2007; Lynch, 2002). The more globally the Taiwanese travel in the world that is governed by the Westphalian system of sovereign nation-states, the more urgently they feel the need to have a Taiwanese national status (Wang, 1999; 2000). The movement of Taiwanese nation-building led by non-KMT political activists from mainly the Hoklo *benshengren* ethnicity, formed the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) in 1986, sought political and media rights, and asked for the end of authoritarian rule and even for the establishment of a new state (H.-l. Wang, 1999; 2000; 2002; 2007; Chuang, 2011; Wakabayashi, 2014, p.187).

PRC has claimed that Taiwan is one of its provinces, which has been recognised widely in international politics. It has promoted its political unification scheme "One Country, Two Systems", to which KMT and DPP have responded differently (Schubert and Braig, 2011; Wu, 2011). [4] The KMT has articulated to PRC's stance by taking an ambiguous discourse made in 1992, the 1992 Consensus, which acknowledges that "there is one Chinese state in the world, but this state is subject to the interpretations in Taiwan and mainland China" (Wu, 2011; Hughes, 2014). The KMT wishes to keep Taiwan "a part of a Chinese country, which is the ROC", following its Sino-centric Chinese nationalism. KMT, who might agree with the statement that "Taiwan belongs to 'China'", does not accept PRC's unification scheme (Wu, 2011). On the contrary, the DPP refuses PRC's provision more strongly than KMT, claiming that the political future of Taiwan remains in dispute and should be decided by the people in Taiwan (Schubert and Braig, 2011, p.75). Building a Taiwanese nation and the denial of the 1992 Consensus are the uncompromised political goals of DPP.

After more than a decade of political competition, the DPP won presidency and ruled Taiwan during 2000 and 2008. DPP oriented Taiwanese people towards a Taiwan-centric stance (Chang, 2006; Schubert and Braig, 2011). PRC ratified Anti-Secession Law to prevent further nation-building move of DPP administration in 2005 (Schubert and Braig, 2011). The KMT came back to power in 2008 and will be incumbent until early 2016 (Wakabayashi, 2014, p.iv; p.365). It tried to orient Taiwan back to a Sino-centric stance (Hughes, 2014).

[4] The principle of "One Country, Two Systems" is a political arrangement formulated by the PRC government in the early 1980s for Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau, which have had capitalistic political and economic systems. It promises that their political and economic systems will remain, even when they reunify with the PRC, as a "special administrative region".

To compete for political power, the KMT and DPP have had different economic policies with PRC in the twenty-first century. During Cold War, the KMT-ruled Taiwan benefited in the US-Japan-Taiwan economic connection for its economic performance (Gold, 1986; Ching, 1994, p.202). Nonetheless, since the late 1980s and 1990s, PRC has been Taiwanese manufacturing sector's production base (Schubert, 2010, p.74). Exporting goods to the PRC market has become a main target since the 2000s (Chow, 2013). The PRC has arguably exerted its economic market power to increase the economic integration between Taiwan and the PRC so as to encourage the Taiwanese's positive political attitude toward unification (Tanner, 2007). Since then Taiwanese economic and socio-political-cultural aspects have been in widening disjuncture, in which KMT and DPP holding welcoming and sceptic positions towards the economic integration with mainland China, represented by the Economic Co-operation Framework Agreement (ECFA), a bilateral trade deal between Taiwan and PRC (Amae and Damm, 2011; Schubert and Braig, 2011, p.83; Fuller, 2014).

The KMT and DPP have also both articulated Taiwanese multi-ethnic reality by discoursing this society as a multi-ethnic community formed from four main ethnic groups; this is not to say that the new imagined community is harmonious. The hierarchical socio-economic differences have been maintained in the ethnically heterogeneous society (Chun, 2002; Kuo, 2003; Wang, 2004; Ngo and Wang, 2011). In the hegemonic politics between KMT and DPP, Mandarin – the language made official by KMT – remains the official language of Taiwan. Although DPP administration made Hokkien, Hakka and indigenous languages compulsory in Taiwan's national education, it did not replace Mandarin as an official language with Hokkien (Chang, 2006; Kloter, 2006, p.219; Schubert and Braig, 2011, p.77; Fell, 2012, p.141).

Overall, in the late 1990s, it was argued that Taiwan became "post-Chinese-nationalist", because the society still bore some imprints of the history of KMT Chinese nationalism while no longer represent China in international politics (Hughes, 1997). Weiming Tu (1996, p.1121) argues that the new post-Sino-centric Taiwan is a good case of "glocalism". It imports many cultural products from abroad but in the meantime, cultural localisation is becoming popular. Tu also states that cultural localism, which walks well with pro-Western globalism, has become a dominant discourse and Sino-centrism has been marginalised domestically. Shu-mei Shih (2003) praises the emergence of globalisation and localism. Shih argues that multi-ethnicities in Taiwan may benefit from globalisation as then every individual could at least use globalisation for his or

her own purposes, although not each one has equal access to global networks (Ibid, p.146). Not advocating "pan-Chinese economic universalism", which is best represented by KMT's policy and instrumentalises cultural Chinese-ness for economic gain (Ibid, p.148), she encourages this post-Sino-centric Taiwanese identity to become more multicultural, embracing global cultural hybridisation and resisting Sino-centric nationalist cultural incorporation in order to invent new forms of trans-culture as the core of a unique entity called "Taiwanese identity". In this way, the cultural formation of Taiwanese society is unlikely to be marked by "a specific ethnicity or community, but by universal qualities shared by all cultures" (Ibid, p.146).

### 1.3.2 The History of Taiwanese TV Drama Programming

This transition from one-party authoritarian rule to a multi-party system not only appears in the political field, it also relays to the field of TV culture, which changed from oligopoly of three KMT-controlled stations to multi-channel system operating in a neo-liberal and globalised environment. Television was introduced in Taiwan in 1962 during the KMT's authoritarian rule. The first Taiwanese TV station, TTV (Taiwan Television Company), produced its first TV drama *Chong Hui Huai Bao* (meaning "Come back to me") in the same year (Tsai, 2004, p.165). Before the 1990s, there were only three terrestrial TV stations – TTV, CTV (China Television Company) and CTS (Chinese Television System) – that were controlled by the KMT (Lee, 1979, pp.143-171; L. Lin, 2006, p.73; Ko, 2008). As a form of entertainment, the TV drama of these three stations was an important ideological tool of the KMT, which wanted it to be anti-Communist and Chinese nationalistic, and to deliver stories of ancient Chinese history and domestic family life to its domestic audiences (Lee, 1979, pp.143-171; 2000, p.128; L. Lin, 2005; 2006; F.-M. Lin, 2006, p.241; Ko, 2009a).

Taiwanese political economic transition led to the liberalisation of the TV market and the ensuing fragmentation of TV consumption in the 1990s. The deregulation of the TV market was over-determined by multiple factors in a very specific historical context dating back to the early 1990s. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, both domestic interests (localisation and pan-Chinese economic universalism) and foreign interests (Hollywood and Western media) pressed the ruling KMT for open access to all media, including TV (Feng, 1995, p.33). Externally, the US and Western film studios and satellite TV also wanted to enter Taiwan, the people of which was then satisfied by illegal underground cable TV locally called "the Fourth Channel" as opposed to "the

Old Three" (TTV, CTV and CTS) (Lee, 2000, p.132; Cheng, 2002, pp.329-330) for non-KMT information and entertainment. The Western media, especially the US enterprises backed by the US government, urged the KMT government to open up markets.[5] Domestically, the political groups advocating the DPP and Taiwanese nationalism asked for the foundation of TV channels that favour their viewpoints (Feng, 1995, pp.33-35). Many Taiwanese home-grown TV entrepreneurs planned to legally run Taiwan-based satellite TV that targeted the pan-Chinese market in East Asia, especially the PRC (which had opened up labour and business market for Taiwanese business and encouraged them to come to mainland China since the 1980s), Hong Kong and Taiwan, as their strategies for overseas expansion (Feng, 1995, pp.24-26; 2007, pp.125-129; Curtin, 2007, p.161). The KMT, which was marginalised in international politics yet had followed American neo-liberalist ideology, on the one hand, could no longer suppress these domestic urges and, on the other, considered joining the World Trade Organisation (WTO) (and accepting its neo-liberalistic free-market principle) as an opportunity to participate in international economic scene (Feng, 1995, pp.31-65; 2007). It opened up the TV market, allowing the foundation of new terrestrial TV, cable TV and satellite TV, plus the entrance of foreign satellite TV in August 1993 (Feng, 1995, pp.31-65; 2007). A new terrestrial Formosa Television Inc. (FTV), run by a Taiwanese nation-building group politically devoted to a new Taiwanese state, started to air in 1997 (Chen, 2002, p.301; Curtin, 2007, pp.163-169). A channel of Public Television Service (PTS) started free-to-view in 1998 (Rawnsley and Rawnsley, 2001).

The KMT, being more in agreement with the idea of pan-Chinese economic universalism, began encouraging Taiwanese TV productions to target the growing ethnic Chinese market in East Asia; the KMT government released the economic policy of "Asia-Pacific Regional Operations Centre", aiming for Taiwan to replace the economic role of Hong Kong, that had been in the sovereignty transition, to become the centre of six regional industries (manufacturing, sea transport, air transport, financial service, telecommunication and media) (Feng, 2007, p.129). The policy – which was considered a failure in the Taiwanese public sphere in 2000s – added media in its plan after witnessing the trend of cross-Strait media interaction initiated by overseas-market-

[5] The USTR (United States Trade Representative) releases a Special 301 Report annually to protect and identify trade barriers to US enterprises. During 1989 until 1997, Taiwan was placed on the priority watch list of the report for the violation of intellectual properties of US products. The violation also included the circulation of US products on the Fourth Channel. In 1992 and 1993, the USTR exerted more pressure on the KMT government to take action to protect the rights of US enterprises in the Taiwanese market. This resulted in the ratification of the Cable Radio and Television Act in Taiwan that legalised the Fourth Channel. For more information, see Y. Kurt Chang (1994).

oriented Taiwanese media enterprises themselves. According to its rationale, the Taiwanese TV businesses should reorient their productions for the growing ethnic Chinese market (especially the PRC) in East Asia (Feng, 2007, p.129). Yet the PRC never allowed these Taiwanese satellite TV channels to enter its territory in the 1990s, and the latter mainly relied on this Taiwanese TV advertisement market (Feng, 2007, pp.125-129; Curtin, 2007, p.162). The 1990s' Taiwanese TV market was competed for by domestic programmes from TV stations controlled by the KMT, new TV stations controlled by pro-independent politicians, new Taiwanese satellite TV channels aiming at pan-Chinese audiences in East Asia, and satellite channels owned by transnational media conglomerates. The TV advertising market has been competed for by more than 100 TV channels, including terrestrial, cable and satellite TV channels. On average, a TV channel shares only 110,000 individuals (Chang, 2011, p.48). The cable TV subscriptions reached 1.5 million households in July 1993 (Feng, 1995, p.37) and around 5 million households (60% subscription rate) on official record in 2010.[6] The result was over competition in the Taiwanese TV market, low-cost programming and reliance on cheap foreign imports.

The consumption of TV programmes fragmented into groups with different "tastes", in Bourdieu's terms (1984). Politically charged TV channels were engaged with the national identity and politics in Taiwan by catering to male and female audiences with news and dramatic programmes that conform to their stances (Feng, 1995, pp.31-65; Curtin, 2007, pp.156-158). FTV and SET, two domestic TV stations established by pro-independence politicians and businessmen (Chen, 2002, p.301; Curtin, 2007, pp.163-169; Sun, 2012), made TV dramas and competed with the Old Three's drama programming. The Old Three's Mandarin-speaking historical and martial arts dramas and the Hokkien-speaking family dramas from FTV and SET competed fiercely with each other over the 8-9pm time slot in the 1990s (Ko, 1999; Chen, 2001; F.-c. I. Yang, 2008c, pp.283-285; 2015). Since the beginning of 2000s, the Hokkien dramas have had a higher viewership than the Mandarin dramas in the time slot. Importantly, whilst commercial localism (guarding the domestic market with low-cost commercial productions) became an economic strategy, the Old Three gradually relied on pan-Chinese co-production with the PRC media companies for its demand of historical and martial arts dramas (Chen, 2001; S.-C. Cheng, 2010; Lai, 2011). By the 1990s, the domestic TV production system had started regional

[6] Available at: http://www.ncc.gov.tw/english/files/11021/278_743_110210_1.pdf [Accessed 6 September 2015].

operation. Until the 2000s, however, its regional operation mainly adhered to Chinese-speaking markets outside Taiwan (Feng, 1995, pp.19-27; 2007; Chen, 2001; Curtin, 2007, p.133-150; S.-C. Cheng, 2010; Lai, 2011).

Non-commercial domestic TV channels, PTS and the Buddhist Da-Ai TV Channel, occupied a small audience portion.[7] The PTS has been weak because of its lack of sufficient funding since its launch in July 1998. This minimum funding might be because the government views the PTS as an alternative "supplement" to the competitive commercial TV formed of more than one hundred cable and satellite channels and four commercial terrestrial TV channels, several of which were directly controlled by the KMT and DPP (Feng, 1995, pp.67-122; Liu and Chen, 2004, p.54). Although its news, made-for-TV films and documentaries have gradually attracted educated urban citizens and cultural and media critics, it has had very limited budget for drama productions (Weng, 2006).[8]

Foreign entertainment imports were considered better in quality than the programmes of the Old Three before the 1990s (Feng, 1995, pp.15-16). Yet official TV imports were controlled and kept to a minimum before the 1990s in the Old Three and were highly dependent on the KMT's diplomatic relations with specific foreign countries (Lee, 1979, pp.143-171). Before the 1990s, they largely came from the US, Japan and Hong Kong, the three important trade partners to the KMT-ruled economy (Lee, 1979, pp.143-171; Luo, 1996; Ishii, Su and Watanabe, 1999; Curtin, 2007). The legalised Fourth Channel took advantage of these stronger foreign imports to gradually win a larger share of the domestic market. Hong Kong martial arts genres, US films and TV dramas, Japanese variety shows and female-oriented TV dramas, became popular programmes on cable TV in the 1990s, attracting various audience groups. Even the contents from the politically antagonistic PRC (e.g. historical dramas) and the more culturally neutral South Korea (urban dramas) entered Taiwan in the mid-1990s (Kim, 2005; Zhu, 2008, p.107). Utilising the foreign imports, satellite TV attracted many of these Taiwanese audience groups and further contributed to the TV market fragmentation.

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[7] Da-Ai TV station began to air on 1 January 1998, according to its website, which is available at http://www.daai.tv/daai-web/aboutdaai/about.php [Accessed 16 August 2016]. Information about more than 180 TV dramas made by Da-Ai TV are available at http://www.daai.tv/daai-web/drama/ [Accessed 16 August 2016].

[8] Its funding does not directly come from household licence fees. Instead an annual fund has been allotted from the governmental budget, according to the Public Television Act (ratified on 18 June 1997). The governmental funding was NT$1.2 billion (£24 million) during 1998 and 2001 and has remained NT$0.9 billion (£18 million) since 2002; in 2005, its total income was NT$1.5 billion (£30 million), including governmental funding, public donations and incomes like real estate rent (Weng, 2006).

To the Taiwanese, the US and Japan have been the main centres of modernity alongside Hong Kong, being a symbol of Chinese modernity (Iwabuchi, 2002, pp.121-157; Curtin, 2007, pp.29-67). Since WWII, the West, the US in particular, has been the most important reference for the Taiwanese economically, politically, militarily and culturally (Chen, 2010, pp.161-209). American and Japanese media culture were popular among different audience groups, partly as a means to reject KMT's Sino-centric media culture and its Confucian value systems (Lii and Chen, 1998; Ishii, Su and Watanabe, 1999; Iwabuchi, 2002, p.150; Huang, 2008). Apart from economic, political and military connections, consumption of Hollywood (American) culture has been popular in the Taiwanese media for a long time. Yet it did not enjoy absolute domination during the Cold-War period as Hong Kong entertainment culture was equally popular, apart from the domestic production of the KMT's media system (Lee, 1979, pp.143-171; Lii, 1998; Ishii, Su and Watanabe, 1999; Curtin, 2007). Hollywood has been dominating the film market since the liberalisation period in the 1990s when the Hong Kong film industry was weakening (Curtin, 2007, pp.85-108). It has also expanded into Taiwan's cable TV market since the same time (Ishii, Su and Watanabe, 1999). Generally Taiwanese audiences have been receiving Hollywood values in action and romantic genres.

Although the audiences have consumed Western media, many Taiwanese women still had ambivalent attitudes towards Western depictions of sexual freedom and gender relationships (Iwabuchi, 2002, p.148; Huang, 2008, p.199). This is because, firstly and morally, they have been tied by Confucian codes even though they have watched American shows and fantasised about American lifestyles (Huang, 2008, p.199). Secondly, they have sought TV dramas that subtly deal with similar problems in their daily lives as more feasible references. Thus, they have found alternatives from culturally proximate East Asian products (Iwabuchi, 2002, p.148; Hu, 2005; 2008; Yang, 2008a; b).

Japanese colonisation left a huge legacy in Taiwan. Taiwanese people feel ambivalent towards Japan and regard Japanese modernity with nostalgia and fascination (Tsai, 2005, p.108). In the Cold-War/martial-law period, the KMT re-Sinicised Taiwan and suppressed Japanese elements to a minimum for its Chinese nationalism education (Luo, 1996, pp.14-59). Yet the two countries were economically inseparable in the Cold-War economy led by the US. Thus the KMT's Japanese policy was "economically dependent on Japan yet culturally anti-Japanese" at that time (Ko, 2008, p.126). In 1972, due to the end of diplomatic relationship between ROC and Japan,

the KMT completely banned the already minimal Japanese media imports (Luo, 1996, p.15). Yet Japanese media influence has remained in the Old Three system, not in the form of imports but as a format reference since the early stages of Taiwanese TV.[9] Taiwanese TV show workers have constantly adapted Japanese formats and the tendency has never stopped (Mao, 2010). The reference relation also existed in Taiwanese pop music and advertisement production (Ching, 1994, pp.207-208; Tsai, 2005, p.108).

The ban on media culture from Japan was lifted in the early 1990s, following in the wake of political, social and media liberalisation (Luo, 1996, pp.105-139). On the Fourth Channel, apart from the American content, Japanese content, which commonly appeared with a bundle of idol stars, TV dramas and variety shows, quickly became popular among adolescents and grown-ups in their twenties in the 1990s in an outbreak of "Japanophilia" – interest or love of Japanese (popular) culture (M.-t. Lee, 2004; Ko, 2004). Comparatively, historical and martial arts dramas from the Old Three or from Hong Kong and the PRC remained attractive among older male and female audiences (Curtin, 2007, pp.133-150). FTV and SET's Hokkien TV dramas also attracted older female audiences (Chen, 2001). The Japanese content also reached the younger audience via underground video cassettes and VCDs (Hu, 2004). This local popularity of Japanese TV drama in Taiwan was part of a larger regional female phenomenon in the 1990s (Iwabuchi, 2004a). The Japanese youth-centred urban dramas featuring young Japanese idols were introduced by satellite TV, especially Star TV, with the label of "Japanese Idol Drama", to the pan-Chinese market including Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, the PRC etc. with Mandarin dubbing (Ching, 2000a, p.256).

According to Leo Ching (2000b), Taiwanese youth's embrace of Japanese media culture, including TV drama, was connected to the audiences' desire for Japanese modernity and the desire to depart from the KMT Sino-centric value and ethical codes. Many academic audience-focused researchers chose senior-high school and university students as case studies and reached similar conclusions to Ching's critique (Lii and Chen, 1998; Iwabuchi, 2002, pp.121-157; M.-t. Lee, 2004). Japanese dramas not only offered beautiful characters in fashionable styles, but also individualistic resolutions and values for urban dwellers to help cope with emergent personal

[9] Retiring TV director Teng-Yi Lin (2010) recalled on a public forum that he adapted Japanese novels into TV dramas for TTV in early 1960s.

agonies and troubles in urban settings. Regarding the resolutions and values, they developed a highly reflexive storytelling out of the writers' serious engagement with post-bubble-economy Japanese society (Tsai, 2002). These Japanese TV dramas were cathartic and thought-engaging to both men and women, who demanded more progressive and contemporary ways of living (Hu, 2008; 2010). Some adult-oriented Japanese dramas critiqued Japanese modernity, revealing social tensions in Confucian ethos (Liew, 2011). The Japanese imports were different from Sino-centric imaginations embedded in the Old Three's TV dramas, the patriarchal values and exaggerated dramatic styles in localist TV dramas from DPP-connected FTV and SET and the overt sexual freedom in American TV dramas (Iwabuchi, 2002, p.148; Huang, 2008, p.199). The Japanese dramas, alongside their idol talent culture, later became the main reference for the local idol drama industry.

In summary, in the 1990s and early 2000s, it seems that the laissez-faire TV market worked, and many non-KMT political cultural forces in this society entered the TV field and benefited in general. Sino-centric TV culture turned to co-production with the PRC whilst the commercial culture of Taiwanese nation-building groups was home-based as the above section argues. Youngsters were consuming foreign imports introduced by the new satellite and cable TV as well as underground video circulation. At that time there were no similar domestic programmes tailoring to these demographics until *Meteor Garden* was produced by a number of new generation TV workers in 2001. Situated in a deregulated environment characterised by free flow of popular Japanese and other foreign dramas that interested female audiences in the country, the new Taiwanese drama makers succeeded in adapting Japanese manga as well as emulating the styles of Japanese TV dramas, and then derived a contingent and opportunistic form of inter-Asian "package" of idol drama, including inter-Asian funding, presale and co-production, to sustain at regional level.

## 1.4 A Critical, Interdisciplinary Study of Media (Idol Drama) in Cultural Studies

Critical media studies identify three important areas of research: text, production and reception (Taylor and Willis, 1999, p.239). How textual meaning is constructed is one of the studies' cornerstones. However, relying solely on such textual analysis could be considered

problematically isolated for it overlooks both production and consumption contexts (Ibid, p.27, p.103). A media product is produced and disseminated under conditional factors before an audience gets to watch a TV drama, and every individual has his or her own context when watching. Today, media analyses from a cultural studies paradigm are more likely to pay attention to at least two of the areas bridged by textual analysis (Fiske, 1987; Ma, 1999; Tsai, 2002; Lukacs, 2010).

The development of the regional operation of idol drama is of prime interest and its articulation of Taiwanese inter-Asian relations in the regional context. It will be explained why the dramas "emerge at a specific time", whose possible interests they serve and under what "institutional constraints" they are situated (Kaplan, 1993, p.10). Such an inquiry demands a research method that covers both context and symbolic articulation of idol dramas. In this light, I will take into consideration the production aspects – the political economy of the production condition (that is, the larger political environment and the mechanism of media production, the latter of which includes media institutions, the TV industry's market structure and funding source, etc.) and production tradition and convention – and textual articulation of the idol dramas. Regarding signification, I will enquire into how idol drama, as a product created under increasingly regionalised forces, represents "the Taiwanese in East Asia" and how it mediates the complex geo-political and economic realities in the region, and in what type of regional political economic context.

I will view culture in several related senses. As "media culture" it firstly refers to idol drama – a symbolic production or a specific signifying product created from the artistic and intellectual activities of humans (Williams, 1982, p.13). The idol drama as media culture has its ideological dimension connecting to larger social world that is dominated by specific forces. The ideological effect of the signifying practices – the connotative level of the cultural signification – in relation to various forms of cultural politics between the powerful and the suppressed, is the focus of critical media studies (Hall, 1996, p.395). Idol drama is a commodity produced with commercial rule. Commercial media as a system is always controversial. Earlier critical theorists dismissed it as an industry of "false consciousness", because it tended to adhere to the dominant value system which was accepted by the mainstream society. Later researchers adopted a more complicated framework in the light of the Gramscian concept of hegemony (Hall, 1974; 1982; 1986a; 1989). If we accept the notion that the most commercially successful media must "mediate" and "address"

the mass demands/desires of society, we can say that the commercial media must win the consent of the mass and heterogeneous demands of audiences to achieve commercial success. The issue is connected to the hegemonic articulation of dominant and dominated value systems and social consent in media production. This issue demands a non-determinist theorisation on the hegemonic contestation between different social groups, and the examination of the struggle/access over meaning in the non-conflict-free media institution noted by Stuart Hall (1974, pp.289-290, p.296; 1982, p.81).

Overall, Hall's theorisation of media, in particular, his concept of (mediated) articulation explicitly informs my analysis of the inter-Asian operation of idol drama. Pierre Bourdieu's approach to the field of cultural production also inspires my analysis of idol drama industry (1993). They share some ground as both of them equally stress the significance of context for cultural production in their cultural sociological analyses and society-media relationship, especially how the latter is conditioned by the former, but they are different in their approach to social relations between different social groups/classes. Bourdieu provides a relational account of how (cultural and media) practices are shaped by social structures but Hall problematises media messages in his neo-Gramscian analysis of the formation of cultural hegemony. I draw on their concepts that suit my research purposes.

In the above section, I have contextualised idol drama against, firstly, the overall political transitions of Taiwan since the 1990s and the competing political forces and ideologies today, and, secondly, the homologous transition of Taiwanese television industry. The first analytical chapter of the thesis delineates idol drama's markets in East Asia and their competitions patterns (Research Question 1). I will examine the emergence of idol drama and its market conditions in the twenty-first century by looking at the mechanism and logic of idol drama's inter-Asian operations. Its initial operation of the pioneering TV drama *Meteor Garden* (2001) and more inter-Asian operations afterwards will be introduced. These new operations, facing a deteriorating domestic market and funding conditions, have responded to the booming South Korean media culture, incorporated elements of funding markets in South East Asia and the PRC, and co-produced with Japanese media enterprises. The analysis will be based on industrial reports and interviews.

The second analytical chapter throws light on neo-liberal and global forms of cultural politics in production aspect of a cultural field by teasing out several idol drama packagers' strategies –

their advantages and constraints – and their legitimacy as well as contestations (Research Question 2). This analysis draws on Hall's theories on cultural politics in warfare of ideas (1974; 1982; 1986a; 1989) and Bourdieu's conception of competition in the production field of symbolic goods (1993). Bourdieu's notion of field helps by bringing a relational pattern of the cultural production field. In this light of Hall and Bourdieu, Taiwanese society has fragmented politically and culturally, its TV market has been liberalised, and its TV drama production field has had multiple production groups who have had their own strategies and preferences. I suggest that cultural politics takes place, primarily, in competition between many production companies in Taiwan with their own value-laden strategies. The companies strive to enter, stay, and prosper in this competitive field. Secondly, these production companies can employ workers who could form internal friction inside the companies for not agreeing to their strategies and decisions, in which different values are marginalised. This struggle/access over meaning in the media institution has been a concern of media studies (Hall, 1974, pp.289-290, p.296; 1982, p.81; 1986a; 1989; Gitlin, 1979). Thus a key question for us to understand such cultural politics is whether the individual production companies' creative strategies obtain cultural or economic legitimacy/consent and remain in the cultural field, within the industry and on the market. I shall introduce five types of inter-Asian operations of the producers of idol drama, four of which are focused in the chapter – their strategies, constraints and legitimacy in the field. A unique issue concerning cultural politics of inter-Asian idol drama is that the inter-Asian idol drama productions have various foreign partners as allies. Their striving for legitimacy is related to the perceptions of their allies in Taiwan.

The last section of the thesis considers the inter-Asian imaginations in idol drama (Research Question 3). Borrowing Stuart Hall's approach to mediated articulations in signification (Hall, 1974; 1982; 1986a; 1989; Slack, 1996, p.125), I will examine the mediated articulation of an East Asian "little subjectivity" (a term meaning the subjectivity of a small country) from Taiwan with the patriarchal nationalist forces from its stronger neighbours in East Asia, abiding by Kuan-Hsing Chen (1998; 2010) who modifies Hall's concepts for critical cultural studies in Taiwan. This analysis focuses on regional relations instead of class relations, which was the main concern of Hall's media theory.

## 1.5 Key Terms Defined

### 1.5.1 Packaging and Packagers

Two terms have been adopted in East Asian cinema studies on regional and transnational filmic co-operation: assemblage and packaging (Davis and Yeh, 2008; Berry, 2013). There is also some shared ground as they both reflect on filmic co-operation in the region, but there is difference in emphasis. Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh (2008) uses the term "package" to conceptualise diverse types of artistic and creative combination of East Asian film co-productions between Japan, South Korea, PRC, Hong Kong. It describes the practice of media makers flexibly looking for resources and means of production from different East Asian national industries in their productions. Their attention is on the creating and producing practices of film-makers, their network relationships, work conditions and filmic contents and aesthetics (Tsai, 2011, p.243) and they do not make the argument against a totality presumption, as the concept of assemblage Chris Berry suggests does. Observing the co-operations between three Chinese-language film industries in forming new Chinese-language filmic culture that is led by industries' global marketing, Chris Berry (2013) attempts to grapple the logic behind these industrial operations by adopting the concept of "assemblage" from Aihwa Ong (2005) who was inspired by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. His argument stresses that these practices may seem to mean "integrations", but do not necessarily lead to a total and homogeneous system.

With different emphasis, both concepts shed light on the filmic co-operation in Chinese-language and East Asian media companies. For my attention on the practices on the creative dimension of the co-operations, the term "packaging" seems more relevant. I use "packaging" and "operation" interchangeably in the thesis, as empirical terms describing the actual practices of drama making in terms of assembling cast, seeking shooting locations and applying for foreign funding. I call the producers "(lead) packagers" for their decision-making positions when deciding target markets, raising investment from the markets and casting foreign actors, in contrast to other "packaging team members".

Because my thesis focuses on new forms of cultural politics over values in idol dramas, I will particularly focus on story development in which the producer plays a role, co-working with scriptwriters. The term "producer" mainly refers to a professional position locally termed *zhizuoren* (meaning "producer"), a person who runs a production company that provides TV programmes to

a variety of TV channels. To avoid confusion, I will use “makers” or “workers” instead to refer to individuals who participate in TV drama productions. Taiwanese TV making is centred on producers. The producers have their own production companies, initiating TV drama production projects, submitting the projects to TV stations for purchase and investment, and assembling and paying for production cast and crew. A producer would scout his or her scriptwriters to develop stories in pre-production before a director, who serves mainly as a professional who visualises scripts into audio-visual forms, is scouted. A producer oversees the completion of the whole process and they are responsible for the TV station and other distribution buyers. The TV producers and scriptwriters are more important, in my analysis, for they decide on the script – the centre of TV drama – in pre-production.

At a theoretical level, I view these producers and their scriptwriters as cultural workers within the paradigm of critical media and cultural studies. I stress three characteristics of the packagers and packaging teams in their works: their mediated elaboration of ideology, how they elaborate it and their relationships with other packagers in their field. Firstly, I draw on critical cultural and literary theories of Marxists who see cultural workers in mass media as carriers of dominant ideology. They are where ideology functions; ideology speaks through them (Hall, 1982, p.88). In the perspective, the packagers have three levels of sociality – their confinement of political economy and literary convention as well as socially structured consciousness (Williams, 1977, pp.192-198). The packagers are structured in different sets of regional and social relationships and they are saturated with the dominant ideologies in the region. They make decisions within the conditions, based on their strategies. For example, the packagers and packaging teams face the question of whether they should apply for and accept particular funding whose provider would interfere in their work in some situations; they would risk being under the control of the fund provider. The second dimension is the textual combination of inter-Asian packager. This is related to the function of the packager who selects and composes different elements to form a particular symbolic work (Barthes, 1977). These packagers choose their ways of mediation, selecting and composing different elements to form a particular set of symbolic work. They select and package different East Asian elements at production and narrative levels in their works. Their last dimension is that the packagers are situated relationally in a field of idol drama competing for success. They have different trajectories and packaging strategies which would be identified as central characteristics of their brand images. They have different critical distance from ideological

imperatives (Williams, 1977) and different critical agencies to produce reflective minds among viewers (Benjamin, 1978).

This notion of packagers reflect the elitist criticism towards mass-produced culture by Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno (1944) in order to maintain a critical stance towards the standardisation of the contemporary commercial production of culture and its contribution to the maintenance of the existing social order. Most of the production companies work in very confining commercial environment. A contestable and transformable field, with more agents from different social groups struggling to enter and stay, could provide a possibility of change. Idol drama can be one such case. The various TV drama production companies and agents could translate the ideological contestation of larger social politics into the cultural field of idol drama in different ways. However, it is yet to be discovered how idol drama and its production can generate possibilities of change (challenge to the existing patriarchal, nationalist and capitalist discourse in East Asia).

### 1.5.2 East Asia

In the beginning of the chapter, several Taiwanese idol drama producers mentioned “Asia” in their discourses. They were only referring to “East Asia”. Their original phrasings would be kept when they are quoted throughout the thesis. Knowing the risk of being simplifying the complexity of regional imagination, I use the term “East Asia” interchangeably with “Asia”, mainly when I mention “inter-(East) Asian packaging” to refer to idol drama’s regional assembly of production means. There are several meanings to the term “East Asia” in my thesis. Its first meaning refers to “a geographical space”, including at the very least more than 10 countries. “East Asia”, in this context, refers to both North East Asia (Japan, South Korea and the PRC) and South East Asia (Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, etc.). Taiwan and Hong Kong are geographically between the two regions. Yet, the East Asia in my research is not simply based on geographical boundaries, but is more about a “regional (cultural) boundary” created by a circulation network of media culture (Chua, 2004, p.203) and then imagined by contemporary East Asian countries as well as public discussions in response to the traffic of media culture (Berry, Liscutin and Mackintosh, 2009). I mainly discuss it as a cultural space formed of markets and production connections between the following countries (or regions): Taiwan; the PRC; Japan; South Korea; Hong Kong (as a special region of the PRC); Singapore; Malaysia and

Thailand.[10] The first five areas are more fully discussed because of their media companies' production connections to the TV industry in Taiwan.

The cultural entity of East Asia is formed of countries, people, and media enterprises. These countries, people and media may have been considered relatively culturally similar, due to the domination of Confucian philosophical value system. But they have had different national histories, especially their histories of westernisation and shedding of Confucian values (Chua, 2004, p.201), and thus are all nationally and ideologically different, and some of them are in contentious relationship. The cultural space of East Asia is not homogeneous. Yet the term "East Asia" can highlight their shared history of modernisation of being different from Western countries and the experience of Western (cultural) imperialism over the last two centuries (although these experiences were very different). Thus, we need to call them in plural terms, "East Asia(n)s". The meaning also refers to mediated East Asian subjects who embody the nations in TV dramas and the drama-producing professionals and media companies. Both subjects on and behind the screen are "performative subjects" in Homi Bhabha's (1990, pp.297-299) term, structurally embedded and bounded by their nationally dominant value systems. Idol drama is a product created by the Taiwanese media industry with increasing collaboration with its counterparts in East Asian countries. The media industry is an ensemble constituted by businesses, companies, and their projects that supply products firstly to their home market and secondly to important foreign markets. Here, a media company may operate on a regional scale, supplying its products to more than two nationally different markets: for example, a Hong Kong media production company may work as a supplier in the PRC's TV market as well as its "home" market.

With regard to Chinese-speaking societies, the PRC, Taiwan and Hong Kong (even Macau) are different in terms of ideology (e.g. socialism and capitalism), history (e.g. different colonial and imperial experiences) and culture (e.g. different modernisation experiences). Hence, it is meaningless to see them as one. In later analysis, I will group the Hong Kong TV market into the South East Asian market because the dealers of the Hong Kong market are usually also in charge of the circulation of idol dramas in South East Asia.[11] Since Taiwanese society has its own specific

[10] As my thesis mentions both the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, it refers to the former as South Korea and the latter as North Korea. "Korean Peninsula" means the geographical space where today's South and North Korea locate. "Korea" means the nation that has long inhabited the Korean Peninsula.

[11] For instance, the Hong Kong TV market and system is separate from the PRC market and system.

political, economic and cultural formations, I will analyse it as a unique Chinese-speaking (Mandarin) country, separated from the one on mainland China. My analysis covers Taiwan's interactions with South East Asia, the PRC, Japan, and South Korea via idol drama making, marketing and text.

### 1.5.3 Inter-Asia

I will use "inter-Asia(n)" to capture the Taiwanese TV industry's increasing operation between East Asia and collaboration with East Asian partners. Previously, three terms have been used to describe the regional practices of East Asian media: pan-Asia, inter-Asia and intra-Asia. Each term has its own particular meaning. Firstly, "pan-Asia", which highlights regional unity, was coined by East Asian film-makers who combined their know-how, means of production and market bases to compete with the Hollywood threat, especially in the early 2000s. "Pan-Asia" mainly means multiple links of at least two East Asian film-makers and contextually implies the existence of competition from Hollywood. Earlier analysis of these East Asian film co-productions tended to follow film-makers' narratives and referred to their films as "pan-Asian cinemas" (Yeh and Davis, 2002) or "pan-Asian productions" (Teo, 2008). Secondly, critical cultural academia in East Asia has chosen "inter-Asia" instead of "pan-Asia", or another term, "intra-Asia". The "inter-Asia" was inspired by the establishment of the inter-American cultural studies network that built critical communications between Latin and North America (Chen, 1998, p.2). The critical scholars in East Asia argued that "there is no unity to the imaginary entity called 'Asia'" and hence chose the term "inter-Asia" (Chen and Chua, 2007, p.1). The term can "highlight the existence of a plurality of 'Asias', to emphasise the links, and to problematise the lines that are drawn between the local, national, regional and global" (Burgess, 2004, p.131). The "Asia" of "inter-Asia" denotes an East Asian subject, and inter-Asia can mean the bilateral or multilateral interactions of the East Asians. The media researchers in the community of inter-Asia cultural studies, who are interested in both the industrial crossovers and cross-cultural relationships in East Asia, have employed "inter-Asia" to describe the diverse fusions of cultural elements in inter-Asian media connections in general (Iwabuchi, 2009; 2010a; b; F.-c. I. Yang, 2013). Finally, "intra-Asia" highlights the geographically-bounded space of East Asia (and by extension, its market). C. J. W.-L. Wee (2012, p.198) used "intra-Asian cinematic productions" instead to examine the spatial imaginations of East Asia in these regionally-produced films.

This research examines how the idol dramas operate in the East Asian market by incorporating East Asian market investment, employing talents and other elements and producing dramas that articulate nationally different social values, and envision Taiwanese relations with other countries in East Asia. I will pay specific attention to their funding, production and narratives. The producers so far have mainly promoted and labelled their works in ways such as Taiwanese-Korean, Taiwanese-Japanese and cross-(Taiwan) Strait co-productions (Chiang, 2003; Liu, 2003a; Wu, 2003a; b; Chen, 2005b; P.-C. Chu, 2011a; Gala TV Station, 2011; Y.-L. Wang, 2011a). It may be argued that, by hyphenating the media culture they interact with, they may appeal to the Taiwanese desire to participate and build links within the regional media communities. Their practices to fuse East Asian media elements seem similar to Koichi Iwabuchi (2009; 2010a; b) and Fang-chih Irene Yang's (2013) descriptions of the inter-Asian media cultural connections within the cultural market of East Asia. Both "inter-Asia" and "intra-Asia" properly describe their practices in their ways. However, "inter-Asia" seems more inclusive than the "intra-Asia" in terms of both marketing (financing), industrial interactions and on-screen relationships. "Inter-Asia" is designed to explain the cross-cultural relations between two East Asias, while "intra-Asia" does not. Hence, I chose "inter-Asia" as my main term for the Taiwanese's varying interactions with other East Asians, in particular, the mainland Chinese, South Korean and Japanese East Asians.

Although the producers of the idol dramas have regionalised their marketing and production process, the term "regionalisation" does not necessarily mean the regional spread of idol drama. Rather it is more about drama producers' ambitions to achieve such a goal, and their de-localised mind-set.

## 1.6 Chapter Layout

To summarise, this PhD thesis examines the inter-Asian packagings and representations in Taiwanese idol drama. I have explained the significances of the inter-Asian idol dramas and the necessity of studying them in this chapter. My approach will look at both their production context and textual articulations. The analytical chapters examine the dramas' three inter-Asian dimensions: market competitions (chapter 4), production strategies (chapter 5) and mediated articulations (chapter 6).

To analyse the inter-Asian packagings and imaginations, a critical approach is necessary. Chapter 2 draws on Western and East Asian critical media theories for setting a framework and concepts. This chapter proposes to see the idol dramas as a female-oriented medium that is subject to three dominant, pedagogical and oppressive value systems (post-colonial nationalist, patriarchal and capitalist/commercial) in Taiwan and other East Asian countries. The scattered sets of dominant value systems, which resemble yet contradict the others in different aspects, form the context of the idol drama industry and packagers who embrace it. Their ambiguous resemblance is one main factor of inter-Asian co-operation, yet their contradictions form the difficulty. The value systems from stronger countries in East Asia, especially their ideas about Taiwan and social (gender) values, have been articulated by idol drama packagers and entered Taiwan. But such articulation is open to competition between different packagers. The inter-Asian packagers articulate about Taiwanese identities and social and gender values in the forefront, with national relations in the background. There are differing examples of mediation, depending on producers' strategies and production preferences.

Chapter 3 reflects my research methodology that adopted a study of idol drama industry and ideological criticism to idol drama's inter-Asian narrations. It firstly traces my interactions with idol drama industry as an observant before and in my doctoral research. I reflect on why I became interested in the industry. I will then discuss my initial presumptions and framework, which were challenged in my interview with key important figures of inter-Asian idol drama making, and how I corrected them with new ones. The second part explains how I use semiotic and ideological analysis to fictional narratives in film and TV for my analysis of idol drama's ideological representations.

Chapter 4 traces the development and characteristics of idol dramas. It examines the history and patterns of their inter-Asian interactions and connections with other East Asian media cultures and industries. Initially, the Taiwanese idol dramas adapted the Japanese manga that appealed to a regional female audience, hybridised Japanese elements with standardised Chinese-speaking settings and obtained not only domestic but also regional success. As regional competition increased and the Taiwanese TV environment worsened, three new packaging logics/patterns appeared at different times. The idol drama packagers, firstly, responded to South Korean media culture's regional popularity by utilising its media elements, secondly, incorporated elements of South East Asia and the PRC whose markets funded the packagers, and, thirdly,

started casting Japanese actors and continued with TV adaptations of manga for the Japanese market.

Chapter 5 examines four inter-Asian production strategies represented by the trajectories of four packagers as well as their contestations for legitimation, in contrast to commercial localism. Different production companies have differing strategies, preferences and schemata based on their leaders' personalities, creative styles, work history, connections, future visions and the imagination of their audience. Their orientations determine their own particular advantages and constraints. The packagers actively seek resources, linkages and alliances in the region. Doing so, they are relatively free from the domestic TV stations' budgetary constraints, but they still cannot compete with local productions in the domestic market. They mediate the dominant values of related countries and articulate national differences. Inter-Asian packagings help sustain them in the field of Taiwanese idol drama, and their sustenance has contributed to heterogeneity and diversification of the field. But they have to defend their legitimacies and respond to criticisms from other idol drama producers, usually by addressing the economic benefit which indirectly helps domestic cultural industries. In particular, PRC co-productions and TV adaptations of manga have involved such politics for legitimation. The heterogeneity of production strategies, characterised by multiple bilateral inter-Asian linkages in the field of idol drama, is structurally homologous with Taiwanese politics, the heterogeneity of which is also characterised by the connections of Taiwanese factions with particular foreign forces, although idol drama culture has a relative autonomy from politics.

Finally, chapter 6 investigates the inter-Asian mediated articulations in idol dramas. It identifies the dramas' three particular inter-Asian envisionings of Taiwanese relations with the PRC, Japan and South Korea and dialogues of national difference in social values with the PRC, Japanese and South Korean markets. The imaginations are embodied in various fictional Taiwanese protagonists interacting with other East Asian regions on-screen. In a multicultural and Western-influenced urban capitalist Taiwan, the articulations are bilateral and sometimes trilateral. Socio-economic and cultural reconciliation with the PRC, referencing to Japanese modernity and exploring Taiwan's commonality with South Korea, are popular themes. The expressions, as a whole, are diverse, seemingly open-ended and even contradictory, forming a multi-faceted system of images that represent Taiwanese economic and cultural relations with other East Asian countries. The inter-Asian imaginations envision Taiwanese relations with other

countries, articulate national differences or tensions, and provide templates concerning values and identities to their target audiences in Taiwan and other East Asian countries to make sense of the world. Serving the economic interests of the media businesses, these dramatic templates articulate the dominant ideological and value systems in the PRC, Japan and South Korea and address the economic and cultural imperatives of interactions and co-operations. The gender and socio-economic expressions vary according to funding sources and target markets, but patriarchal capitalist values generally dominate.

# Chapter 2 Analysing Inter-Asian Idol Drama

In order to analyse the inter-Asian packaging of Taiwanese idol dramas and their mediated articulations of Taiwan and non-Taiwanese East Asian countries, this chapter introduces key theoretical concepts based on Western critical media theories on media production and signification (Hall, 1974; 1982; 1986a; b; 1989; 1996; Williams, 1977; 1982; Bourdieu, 1993). The critical media theories, which make sense of media from the perspective of class politics in a capitalist society, are reviewed, modified and applied to the context of Taiwanese media situated in East Asia and characterised by multiple post-colonial, patriarchal, nationalist, capitalist forces competing in a time of globalisation. My understanding of the Taiwanese context is informed by East Asian critical cultural theorists' ideas of regionally popular media culture, in particular, mass-mediated female-oriented TV dramas (Fore, 1993; Iwabuchi, 2002; 2004a; b; 2009; 2010a; b; Chua and Iwabuchi, 2008; F.-c. I. Yang, 2008a; b; c; 2012; 2013; 2015; Zhu, 2008; Choi, 2010; Dasgupta, 2013).

A basic introduction to the theoretical concepts will be given in 2.1. Then I shall lead the discussion to the East Asian context and idol drama's mediated articulation between different Taiwanese political and cultural factions and their stronger allies in 2.2 and 2.3. To briefly mention, one central concept of the thesis is "(mediated) articulation", which was mainly theorised by Stuart Hall, who suggested probing into the mediated articulation of social discourses and their context as research framework (Hall, 1986a, p.141; Grossberg, 1992, p.54; Slack, 1996, p.115). Yet, my use of the term articulation is different from Hall and other critical media scholars' use of the term, which in their case describes how capitalists' values are dominant in the mass-mediated articulation of social groups. In my case I use it to refer to how the media of Taiwan (a small country) articulates Taiwanese subjectivity ("little subjectivity" in Kuan-Hsing Chen's formulation) with numerous sets of post-colonial, patriarchal, nationalist and capitalist forces from stronger countries in East Asia, negotiating with them in aspects of nationality, gender and class (Chen, 1998, pp.18-20; 2010, pp.92-94).

As there are multiple post-colonial, patriarchal, nationalist and capitalist societies that Taiwan and its idol drama can side with, it is very important to find a spatial concept that can tackle "homologous relations of political and cultural agents in their respective spaces" – the competing relations of post-colonial nation-states in East Asia, the competing relations of

nationalist groups in Taiwan allying with stronger countries, and the competing relations of media (TV drama) production companies in Taiwan. The second central concept is Pierre Bourdieu's "field" (1977; 1984; 1993). It helps me to explicate how different Taiwanese idol drama producers compete in the Taiwanese TV market. As discussed previously, they do so by remediating the dominant values of foreign allies in the articulations. Therefore, the dominant values of the foreign countries, shared by particular audiences in Taiwan, contest with other dramas and their values.

## 2.1 Internationalising Critical Media (Production) Theories to the East Asian Context

### 2.1.1 The Theories of Media Production in Cultural Studies

Mass media has been regarded as a public sphere that would mediate ideas and world views of a community in the study of media (Hall, 1974). Thus, consuming and interacting with the media is an important practice for a subject to socialise with, becoming a social member (McQuail, 1969 cited in O'Sullivan, 1994, p.19). Objecting to the mere interest in "content and effect" of the observational behavioural science that prevailed in media studies in the US since WWII, critical scholars on media, such as theorists from the Frankfurt School, French Marxist tradition, and later from British Cultural Studies, have argued that mass media plays a significant role in social politics by reinforcing capitalist ideology and value systems and suppressing the resistant voice of the working class.[12]

Being interested in the Marxist question of determination or over-determination (Williams, 1977, p.82; Hartley, 1994, p.82), yet objecting to simplified economic determinism (the base determines the superstructure), neo-Marxist Raymond Williams (1977; 1982) and Stuart Hall (1974; 1982; 1989) embarked upon their theorisation of media and society. Two sets of analytical focus occupy their works on the ideological dimension of media and cultural production. Williams's analytical framework is concerned with art work's mediation and its conditions; Hall's is about

[12] The European Marxists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser, see society as an entity formed by a dominant capitalist class and subordinate working class. The Marxists have built their discussions against European industrial societies and capitalist economic development over the last two centuries. The Marxian concept of culture is essentially centred on class in his theory that conceives society as a spatial metaphor of base and superstructure. In this society, the base includes economic activities, and the superstructure refers to the intangible forms of activities, such as school, laws, knowledge and media. In general, Marxism has a strong tendency towards economic determinism, which means that the base structure determines the activities at the level of superstructure (Hall, 1974; 1982; 1986b).

mediated articulation and its context. A scholar of literature and drama, Williams builds up his critical analysis on art works by emphasising their ideological connection with the larger sociological cultural environment (1982, pp.11-12). His research framework is then concerned with "the social process of all cultural production, including those forms of production which can be designated as ideologies" (Ibid, p.30). Williams (Ibid, pp.21-25) thus suggests that analysts should attend first to the social conditions and situations of art works and, secondly, to the works' mediation of social and material relations. Importantly, we ponder the question why and how the social and material relations that form the conditions of the art works would be mediated by the works themselves (Ibid, p.29). Through probing in this way, the Marxist cultural theorist examines how ideology affects and communicates through symbolic production.

Williams' cultural sociology paves the way for cultural studies that focuses particularly on contemporary mass media and popular culture. Another leading theorist, Hall, is also interested in the ideological dimension of mass media. His theorisation of mass media follows the Gramscian approach to social politics whose key argument is that the dominant group's value system addresses other social classes to win consent for leadership – hence its domination is hegemonic and unstable (1982; 1986b; 1991b).[13] A mass media analyst (news in the UK, in particular), Hall argues that the address is mediated in mass media. Hall (1986a) calls this kind of address "(mediated) articulation", drawing on Gramscian Marxists Ernesto Laclau (1977) and Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985; 2014). Briefly speaking, articulation is a common word in the UK. In the Oxford Dictionary, the noun "articulation" and its verb "articulate" has two main meanings. The first is "the action of putting into words an idea or feeling" or "express (an idea or feeling) fluently and coherently"; the second is "the state of being jointed" / "a specified joint" and "forming a joint".[14] Hall expands the second meaning to refer to "a unity of more than two different elements

[13] Hall draws on the theorisations of Louis Althusser and Antonio Gramsci. Althusser (1971) approaches class politics by analysing how the ruling capitalist class employs "state apparatus (e.g. police)" and "ideological state apparatus (e.g. media)". He believes that the ruling class must employ these apparatuses to maintain its domination. Although Althusser insightfully shifts the focus to politics at ideological level, his theorisation does not recognise the dynamism between domination and resistance (Hall, 1982, p.78). The work of Gramsci fills the gap to revise, renovate and sophisticate the Marxist theory (Hall, 1982, p.78; 1986b, p.411). His work is non-reductionist and allows for the possibility of the subordinate class's resistance. Gramsci (1971) argues that the ruling class dominates society through a contesting process in which its value system, alongside its resolution and horizon, wins the assent of the society and thus is legitimised. This is what he calls a hegemonic process. The Gramscian "hegemony" does not mean "incorporation"– implying the disappearance of the suppressed, and absolute assimilation. Rather, to maintain its dominance, the ruling force must constantly address and take account of the social conflicts. It is a unity of difference or a construction of collective identity through difference between two groups in which the suppressed may "lose out" but do not disappear (Hall, 1986b, p.423; 1991b, p.58).

[14] Available at: http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/articulation [Accessed 11 July 2016].

or structures under certain conditions" (Hall, 1986a, p.141; Slack, 1996, p.115). I mainly adopt the second meaning, following Hall. Articulation produces "identity on top of difference" and "unities out of fragments", constructing "one set of relations out of another" (Grossberg, 1992, p.54). It was initially used as sociological concept by Laclau and Mouffe as a call for the socialist activists' strategy of "dis-articulating" the dominant group's discourse by "re-articulating" with critical ones. In other words, the term is used by them to indicate discursive practices that would help form social relationship/linkage between two classes in the social imagination of public opinion. Such practices have different methods and can come from either a dominant or a weak group.

Nonetheless, Hall's theories of mass media mainly use the term to tackle the discursive articulation of the dominant value system in the mass media, in the context of the prevalent domination of capitalist values in the media within the UK in the twentieth century (1982; 1986a). Hall argues that mediated articulation mainly emanates from the most powerful group: that is, mass media produces messages favouring the dominant class's value system. Yet the mediated articulation would be a unity of complex structures in which concepts are related in terms of their differences and similarities in the hierarchically structured articulations (Hall, 1980 cited in Slack 1996, p.115). In the mediated messages, the dominant group is articulated with other social groups which it dominates so that its value system gains consent and will seek social consent for leadership. It is not "dis-articulation" and "re-articulation" from the value systems of the other powerless social groups mentioned above. This outcome mentioned above is related to both the larger ideological environment and the control of means of signification. A weak group's agent can access media production, however this access is limited and has to "perform with the established terms" (Hall, 1982, p.81).

A critical analytical framework in studies of production and content in the media will see the mass mediated articulation and its context, such as the political economy of the media, production relations and larger social environments. Yet, media production is not determined one-dimensionally by one particular factor. The term articulation suggests a more active and complex process of media production and its outcome. As an articulating practice involves many factors, the outcome is "over-determined" (Grossberg, 1992, p.56). Analysts must theoretically and historically map the context of mediated articulation and the forceful value systems that constitute

the context (Grossberg, 1992, p.55; Slack 1996, p.125). In light of the critical media theories, idol drama as a form of mass media will be analysed in terms of context and (mediated) articulation.

### 2.1.2 Internationalising Media Theories to the East Asia Context

Cultural politics between the dominant and the oppressed in East Asia in a time of globalisation appear as multiple layers and are related to multiple countries in the world. To begin with, various post-colonial East Asian countries formed nation-states after WWII. The male-centred nation-states, scattered over different geographical spaces (Grewal and Kaplan, 1994, p.7), are in endless competition with other countries/nations for more resources. On the one hand, they are oppressed by more powerful Western hegemonies. On the other, imperial and colonial relations and power orders also appear between countries with different scales of resources within East Asia. Hence the post-colonial, patriarchal nation-states' value systems have mainly three dimensions: nationalist, patriarchal and capitalist/commercial values.

In the meantime, old geo-political relations seem to have re-emerged. Though experiencing relative demise, larger civilisations, which influenced small countries before the advent of the Western imperialism, are likely to continue to do so in the future (Chen, 2010, pp.12-13). The dominant political cultural groups in small countries are overshadowed by larger countries. Ironically, the patriarchal nationalists in these countries resemble and contradict each other in different aspects of their value systems. Many of them embrace a market economy and summon women in the name of nationalism and patriarchal pedagogies – which moulds women to a national ideal and sacrifices the benefits of the working class to the national capitalist's interest – for their international competition (Bhabha, 1990, pp.299-301).

Therefore, (mediated) articulations between the dominant and the dominated, pluralise at various social levels (class, gender, and ethnicity) and involve different nationalities and nationalist imaginations at the regional level, particularly in the age of globalisation. Consequently, certain values at different levels become hegemonies domestically and regionally. Which patriarchal nationalist capitalist value system will become hegemonic regionally? How are the dominant and repressed value systems articulated with each other in the world of mass media (e.g. idol drama)?

An effort to answer these questions has been initiated by East Asian cultural studies and feminist scholarships that have reframed East Asian cultural politics that are characterised by

colonialism, nationalism, heterosexual patriarchy and capitalism (Chen, 1998; Yang, 1999; Shih, 2007; L. Wang, 2011). In theorising geo-politics in East Asia, Kuan-Hsing Chen (1998, pp.18-20; 2010, pp.92-94) uses "articulation" to refer to the formation of relations between little subjectivities (subjectivities of small countries, such as Taiwan) and larger civilisations (US capitalist neo-imperial modernity, Japanese imperial colonial modernity and Chinese Confucian civilisation). Chen identifies two ways of articulation in the geo-political context: articulation from the dominant/colonial position and that from the dominated/colonised. He argues that colonial imperialism and its top-down interpellation – which usually comes in the name of condescending civilisation and is characterised by colonial assimilation – belong to the former type. Whether little subjectivities experience the process of colonisation or not, they are often forced to identify with specific larger civilisations or even to take sides between competing civilisations with internal splits (1998, pp.18-20). Thus, for Chen, articulation as a formation of relations between two elements can either come from powerful positions or weaker positions. Chen's usage is more similar to Laclau and Mouffe. Hall's main critique points to the former type – the hegemonic (mediated) articulation forming a structure in dominance which is an outcome of the effort from the dominant – and Chen's attention is on the latter type (the articulations from the weaker positions). Chen distinguishes two forms of articulations from the little subjectivity: one complicit to status quo and one dis-articulating it. For the first one, Chen maintains that the active yet non-reflexive identification with larger civilisations (e.g. colonial hybridisation) has been common in Taiwan (e.g. identification with Japanese imperialism and American neo-imperialism). Such identifying articulation might relieve the little subjectivity's anxiety about marginalisation, but it does not touch the core of the subjectivity's identity crisis since it would reproduce the fixed dominant/colonial structure. He calls for "critical syncretism" – critical forms of articulation by the little subjectivity to actively and reflexively mix with various minorities, e.g. the colonised, working class, women and the homosexual (1998, pp.24-28; 2010, pp.96-100). This critical articulation is opposite to those complicit to status quo. It is again similar to Laclau and Mouffe's critical practice to dis-articulate the hegemonic discourse by revealing hidden truth in the re-articulation.

In the field of media, such critical dis-articulating practice to counter dominant discourse, argued by Shu-mei Shih (2007, p.35), has already appeared in contemporary art-house films in Taiwan and other Chinese-speaking regions because the stream of art film has tried to disrupt dominant patriarchal, nationalist and capitalist discourses. Shih calls the signification of the

Chinese-language art films that reveal the linguistic dissonance or heteroglossia and break the myth of pan-Chinese totality and fixity in the ethnic Chinese world, as “minor (mediated) articulation”. It challenges the monolingual standardisation and assimilation of cultures into one Sino-Chinese civilisation.

We can now apply Williams and Hall’s media theory to the idol dramas situated in a context pinpointed by Chen, and analyse them in contrast to arts and art-house films for women. The inter-Asian idol dramas can be seen as complex mediated articulations of numerous sets of forces in the region; they are initiated by the Taiwanese as a little subjectivity facing several larger civilisations. The articulations are multiplied because they can choose one among multiple stronger East Asian countries (such as the PRC, Japan, etc.) and the latter’s value systems. These stronger countries can interfere and articulate with Taiwan. Thus, simply asking whether and how submissive an articulation of Taiwan and its idol drama is towards one dominant country in East Asia is not enough. As Chen points out, the small countries would usually split into several factions that ally with different civilisations, we need a theory that further explains relations of different factions in a social space – a field that is full of different agents competing with each other. I found Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of “field” very useful here.

Bourdieu’s sociology analyses the relations of individuals and agents in different social spaces that range from the larger field of society to the field of cultural consumption and production (1977; 1984; 1993). It explains how agents in the spaces contest with each other, winning legitimacy, although Bourdieu does not find that agents can look for foreign allies and articulate with the allies. Consider these questions: are Taiwanese idol dramas actively taking sides to co-operate with the media industries of stronger societies in East Asia? If so, which one are they siding with? How is one mediated articulation different from another? What is the articulation of this siding? Are the articulations of any sidings more of Chen’s critical syncretism, with more subaltern minorities than non-reflexive practices complicit to status quo and having the ideological effect pinpointed by Hall? Thus an analytical model combining Hall’s critical media analysis and Bourdieu’s theory of field is necessary as it brings plurality to the idea of articulation. Multiple agents exist in a particular field of a small country. With the combination of Hall and Bourdieu’s concepts I can comprehend how the agents seek larger countries as allies and then articulate the value systems of these larger countries. Are the articulations critical of or complicit with the values of the larger?

The following sections theorise the idol drama in terms of context and (mediated) articulation. I shall map their geographically and historically situated context, describe the historically specific features of the context, and see how stronger forces are articulated in the idol dramas that compete in Taiwan.

## 2.2 Context

### 2.2.1 Nationalist, Patriarchal and Capitalist Forces in East Asia

European critical social and cultural theories that have been primarily concerned with class struggle have been applied to different types of social politics, e.g. racial, ethnic and gender politics in the West (McRobbie, 1981; Hall, 1986b; 1991b). Still, they need modification to fit Taiwanese and East Asian contexts characterised by the value systems of three hegemonic and intersecting forces – nationalist and patriarchal as well as capitalist (Hall, 1996, p.397). To briefly summarise, East Asian female-oriented mass media and its targeted audience are heavily influenced by scattered nationalist, patriarchal and commercial forces situated in different East Asian countries. In reality, these three forces usually operate in combination. Each country has its specific domestic ecology that is generally different from that of another country, yet similar in some aspects. Nonetheless, globalisation since the 1990s, has made the dominant value systems in these countries unable to completely control the formation of values and identities in their own countries.

The region has had several structures of value systems: colonial imperialism, post-colonial nationalism, heterosexual patriarchy and capitalism, at least since the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Chen, 2010, p.96). The region is formed from several countries, which possess different levels of power determined by the regional *realpolitik* over the period. The male-centred nation-states are in infinite competition with other countries/nations for more resources (Foucault, 1988 cited in Bhabha, 1990, p.301). They are situated within a global world dominated by the West. Western countries, especially the UK and US, have been influential in East Asia since the nineteenth century. China and Japan, which had a relative power rise and decline, have been the two strongest civilisations in the region, overshadowing smaller countries. The political-economic dynamism influences the cultural formations. The East Asian countries, especially the PRC versus Japan, and South Korea versus Japan, cannot truly reach reconciliation because of historical

issues and territorial disputes. Their cultural nationalism is usually strengthened by agitating the nationals against each other. Inferior to the global and regional hegemonies (formerly colonised by Japan and currently overshadowed by the PRC), the local political-economic elites from Taiwan, such as the KMT and the DPP politicians and other elites, are only dominant within the country. Here, the DPP politicians have risen to compete with the KMT for political domination, and this has divided the country into two nationalistic camps.

The post-colonial patriarchal nation-states are both similar to and different from each other. Their value systems have mainly three dimensions: nationalist, patriarchal and capitalist/commercial. The nationalist rulers are also patriarchal. To compete in the world, they and their discourses, characterised by binarism, seek to integrate heterogeneous internal entities into one. Their people are educated as "object(s) of pedagogy" and also "performative subjects" in Homi Bhabha's phrase (1990, p.299) to contribute to national development together. The post-colonial patriarchal nationalists are granted ruling positions by the people as long as they are "loyal to their nation with conscience" (Abu-Lughod, 2004, p.91). Yet these discourses have internal conflict. The post-colonial patriarchal nationalists oppress other social groups in these countries. The nationalist elites, alongside their male-centred patriarchal ideology, be it agrarian, socialist or capitalist, have suppressed and inculcated women with their value systems (Fore, 1993, p.66).

Their pursuit of national economic development sacrifices and represses powerless social groups. South Korean feminist Hae-joang Cho Han (2000) criticises the South Korean male-centred nationalist state for producing a uniform national subjectivity and suppressing the constitution of alternative social identities for its high-growth, capitalistic economic development. Japanese sociologist Sechiyama Kaku (2013) examines how the persistence of traditional patriarchal values and gender codes in Japan, South Korea, North Korea, Taiwan and the PRC, has influenced and worsened contemporary gender relations, and sustained gender inequality and discrimination in both the family and in the workplace. Due to the marginalisation in the power relations of patriarchal nation-state, women respond ambiguously to patriarchal nationalist values, doing and undoing these values contradictorily at different times (Bhabha, 1990, pp.299-301). Moreover, they do not absolutely and automatically register the patriarchal sense (Liu, 1994, p.58). For instance, feminist scholars from Hong Kong, Taiwan and the PRC follow Indian American feminist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988, p.28) to ask "can the feminine speak", as

Chinese-speaking women are very silenced compared to men. They note the public domination of masculine voices and vision and examine the struggle of the establishment of women's public spheres (Yang, 1999).

Finally, the patriarchal nationalist states embrace a capitalist market economy, prioritising capitalistic resolutions for the national economy. The nation-states sacrifice and suppress the working classes in the interests of national capitalism and international competition. East Asian countries have pursued economic prosperity by making their national economies integral parts of the global capitalist economic system that has expanded from Europe and North America to other parts of the world at different points in time (after WWII in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan and after the 1980s in the PRC). Their state-led industrial advancement and economic growth (Vogal, 1991 cited in Lee and Lim, 2014, p.4) has corresponded with society's embrace of a market economy. More recently, these countries have been under the increasing influence of neo-liberalism that sees culture as an object of international free trade, and also as an effective tool for branding the nation (Ibid, p.5).

### 2.2.2 Impacts of Globalisation

The 1990s saw the emergence of the economic globalisation of East Asia, with the old Cold-War power structure falling apart, and the PRC opening up market/labour to foreign capitals and global economic competition. The liberalisation of the economic system and political democratisation (except the PRC) reached one of its peaks. Those East Asian countries that were once ruled by authoritarian domestic patriarchal-nationalist regimes were impacted by rapid social economic transition and new forms of information flow (Kim, 1999; Chen, 2010, pp.12-13).

Twenty-first-century East Asian countries are undergoing more complex economic integration, increasing their mutual reliance. Yet they are still competing for political and economic power (Zhao, 1997). This competition has continued, leading East Asian nationalists to have complex feelings toward their neighbours (Lo and Pang, 2005, pp.2-3). In the meantime, old geo-political relations between large and small countries seem to have come back. Though experiencing relative demise, larger civilisations seem likely to continue to influence small countries in the future. The political cultural groups dominant in these small countries are overshadowed by the larger countries, such as KMT and DPP in Taiwan opposed to PRC, America, and Japan, as introduced in chapter 1. Ironically, the patriarchal nationalist value

systems in these countries resemble and contradict each other in different aspects of their value systems. Thus it is not difficult to discover the contradictory and schizophrenic co-existence of "harmony" and "opposition", "co-operation" and "competition" and "friendship" and "animosity" in East Asia. Nationalists usually condemn other countries for historical war responsibilities and claim their sovereignty on small islands in territorial disputes. The dynamism in East Asia is characterised by the whimsical shift between, on the one hand, the call for regional reconciliation and a peaceful future, out of economic desire, and, on the other, daunting military preparations and national protests against the other nations (Lo and Pang, 2005, pp.2-3; Cooney and Scarbrough, 2008; Ap, Kwon and Wakatsuki, 2015).

**Inter-Asian Media Consumption and Co-operation**

The region's prosperous economic growth led by strong nation-states has provided material conditions for the development of various media systems in the national markets. The strongest media centres and symbols of East Asian modernity during the Cold-War period were Hong Kong and Japan (Yeh and Davis, 2002; Curtin, 2007, pp.29-46).[15] The post-war Hong Kong-based Chinese-language media was characterised by flexible production (Yeh and Davis, 2002). It had active regional media circulations and production activities. The film (and by extension, TV) industry grew by targeting and treating the regional population as its basic market base and gradually expanding its influence from the ethnic Chinese population to non-Chinese East Asian countries (Chan, 1996; Yeh and Davis, 2002; Tsai, 2005, pp.110-111; Curtin, 2007). In respect of production, the Hong Kong film industry pre-sold screening rights to the distributors for funding (Lii, 1998). Its prosperity attracted many talents from Chinese-speaking countries, such as Taiwan (Tsai, 2005, pp.110-117); its international expansions generated many Hong Kong films casting foreign actors (Morris, 2012). In terms of narratives, it developed narration styles that attracted a wide range of regional audiences with fast-moving scenes and visual spectacles (Chiao, 1991, p.159).

[15] Chinese-language commercial film studios moved from their pre-war centre in Shanghai to Hong Kong during Cold War, because of Hong Kong's proximity to the South-East-Asian film market for Chinese-language films, Chinese film-makers' exiling in Hong Kong during WWII and later the division of socialist mainland China and capitalist Chinese-speaking areas (Curtin, 2007, pp.29-46).

In contrast to its wartime imperialistic expansion, the post-war Japanese media had been inward-looking, addressing its domestic market and refraining from East Asian media export before 1990s (Iwabuchi, 2002, pp.1-4). This is not to say that Japanese media did not have a competitive edge. There was illegal and limited circulation of Japanese media in East Asian countries, including former Japanese colonies, where their governments banned the circulation of Japanese media products in pursuit of the construction of their own national media systems and identity-building (Luo, 1996; D.-H. Lee, 2004; Ko, 2008, p.133). Only Hong Kong media pragmatically established deeper interactions with the Japanese in order to advance in media production (Yeh and Davis, 2002, pp.61-63).

In the 1990s, Japanese media products were widely introduced to audiences in the region, except South Korea where they were still banned (Iwabuchi, 2002; 2004a; b; D.-H. Lee, 2004, p.251). They were largely circulated through both legal (the multinational satellite broadcasters) and illegal (underground video circulation) routes in many East Asian countries (Iwabuchi, 2002, pp.139-141; D.-H. Lee, 2004, p.252; Hu, 2005). The new consumers of Japanese media, who might have once been consumers of media products of Hong Kong as well as those of their own countries, were able to compare the mediated Japanese modernity and value systems with those of Hong Kong and their own countries (Iwabuchi, 2002, pp.135-135; MacLachlan and Chua, 2004, p.156; Fung, 2007). The South Korean media system was also based in its domestic market and this helped it develop a unique national media culture (Lee, 2008). In the late 1990s, it joined the regional media circulation so that East Asian media consumers had one more option (Chua and Iwabuchi, 2008). These East Asian media industries have their own focused genres and target audiences. Collectively, however, they are seen as key actors who attempt to challenge the domination of global media by the US (Iwabuchi, 2002; 2004b, pp.4-5; Chua, 2004).

One arguable means for East Asian women to indirectly express their views and desires may lie in their media consumption. Since the late 1990s, many women in the region have been free to choose between Western, Hong Kong, Taiwanese, Japanese and South Korean media, especially TV dramas. These regional exchanges of TV dramas have particularly drawn critical attention, especially from feminists. Influenced by Western feminism, East Asian feminist scholars started to seek the public spheres of the women of the region (Yang, 1999). They have identified that mass media culture is one important site for contestations between patriarchal ideology and feminist viewpoints, since it can influence and constitute a much wider public (Sang, 1999,

pp.134-135). The transnational consumption of female-oriented TV dramas has been analysed by critical media scholars so as to understand how East Asian female audiences formulate their own gender and social values (Iwabuchi, 2004a; Chua and Iwabuchi, 2008; Huang, 2008; Yang, 2008a; b). TV dramas from different countries have embodied nationally different sets of social values on a continuum between Western and Confucian values. Whilst some women have become a faithful audience of Western TV dramas (Huang, 2008), many East Asian women have looked for more adoptable templates from Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, etc. (Iwabuchi, 2002, pp.144-151; Fung, 2008; Ida, 2008; Lin and Tong, 2008; Heryanto, 2010). This implies the increasing significance of East Asian media products in the process of East Asian female audiences' identity construction and self-expression.

The regional circulation of East Asian media culture is believed to be attributed to the regional cultural proximity in the socio-gender value system shaped by the local East Asian patriarchal-capitalist-nationalist regimes and their business cultures. The "cultural proximity" has two senses (Iwabuchi, 2002, pp.134-135). The first is the essentialistic, static East Asian cultural root of patriarchal Confucianism. These countries all share common roots of patriarchal Confucianism in varying degrees, and have struggled for capitalist economic development and prosperity, although they have developed different contemporary cultural values. Yet even though East Asian media cultures have formed a cultural bloc, they are at different stages of modernisation and westernisation. But the media and cultural productions in more economically advanced countries will remodel themselves to create complicated works to engage with emergent yet controversial social phenomena, issues and values, and address new demands.[16] Their creative innovation and maturity lead to their regional popularity among people in other neighbouring countries who are not satisfied with the domestic media that is rooted in more traditional values. The second sense of the cultural proximity actually exists when a consumer positively identifies with the ideas, values and people's lives in an imported TV drama from a neighbouring country. Only those who accept the product would identify the "culturally proximate" distance between their society (e.g. Taiwan or Singapore) and the society of the imported media

[16] For instance, the 1990s' Japanese TV dramas developed a highly advanced and reflexive storytelling out of their writers' serious engagement with the post-bubble-economy Japanese living context (Tsai, 2002). These Japanese TV dramas provided healing and reflexivity to the individuals, both men and women, who demanded more progressive contemporary ways of living (Hu, 2008; 2010).

(e.g. Japan). Others, who reject it, would not (Iwabuchi, 2002, pp.134-135; MacLachlan and Chua, 2004, p.156).

The same phenomenon of cultural proximity may apply to the regional female consumption of South Korean TV drama. Watching romantic TV dramas from South Korea might be a form of escape and/or a silent protest of the regional women towards their patriarchal society (Yang, 2008a). Yet the values provided by Japanese and South Korean media have slight variations. Comparatively, cultural values encapsulated in South Korean TV dramas are more neo-Confucian, whilst Japanese TV dramas convey more individualistic and post-Confucian values (Choi, 2010; Liew, 2011). For example, South Korean TV dramas offer the regional audience templates that are modern in terms of appearance yet traditional in terms of gender codes (Lin and Tong, 2008). In these dramas, women live out a contemporary utopian myth that is complicit with Confucian and capitalist patriarchy: for instance, they walk into marriages where patriarchal values prevail, whilst continuing to go out to work. Interestingly, this allows South Korean dramas to generate generational/class-specific interpretations. Watching the same drama, middle-aged and working-class women are likely to identify with the traditional values, whilst young middle-class women might more actively negotiate with these conservative values (Yang, 2008b).

To briefly summarise, individuals' values and identities in East Asia have been influenced by various non-domestic media since the 1990s. Unlike the past, the dominant patriarchal nationalist forces of East Asia cannot completely control the choices of their female audiences or nationalise them in an authoritarian manner. Yet the transnational consumption of TV drama has mostly involved the formulation of gender and socio-economic values in the receiving audience because this consumption mainly concerns urban lifestyles and the emotional world. These dramas are "apolitical" in the sense that they are "petite narratives" that do not engage with the "grand narratives" of geo-politics between East Asian countries. That is why this parallel transnational appropriation of another country's values and individualities can take place between two countries, despite the two countries being oppositional in national interests.

As East Asian media industries compete regionally in a more free-trade environment, they consider more active exploitation of their competitors' resources, including talents and other elements, firstly to appeal to their target audience in the domestic market and, secondly, to enter their competitors' home markets. Inter-Asian media productions targeting more than two markets, which were relatively rare before the 1990s except for Hong Kong film, are now considered

common in the region.[17] In the new East Asian media co-operations, the media industries cross over to exchange capitals, markets, stars, talents, formats and other elements both contingently and heterogeneously. These crossovers mean temporary industrial friendship, on the one hand.[18] On the other, they also mean that the media are reiterating regionally accepted values, contributing to the homogenisation of social and gender values in East Asia (Lim, 2008; Yang, 2012).

## 2.3 (Mediated) Articulations

When investigating inter-Asian co-operations, we should pay attention to the issue of articulation and hegemony. An attempt to unite markets and conduct inter-Asian co-production might face a dilemma because it would not only respond to dominant social values but also potentially lead to cross-cultural imaginations – stories articulating at least two national cultures. The articulations could provoke regional debates, discussions and controversies since different national stances would come into play. The national differences in terms of social values, national interests and geo-political power relations, form unprecedented challenges for media industries that plan to articulate East Asian elements together in a diegesis. Not surprisingly, this practice to articulate "East Asian differences" has been considered risky, and demands more historically and politically reflexive efforts on the part of the media workers (Sun, 2000a; b; Tsai, 2005, p.123; Lo, 2005, p.154).

For projects from a small-market industry in the lower level of the East Asian media hierarchy, casting a more established star usually incurs a higher expense. The projects must take advantage of the "star-as-capital" to cover this extra expense. Here there is a difference between the media industries based in larger economies (the PRC or Japan, etc.) and those from smaller economies (Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, etc.). Chinese or Japanese projects can recoup the expense in their domestic markets alone. On the contrary, many transnationally casted

[17] The Hong Kong film industry had a number of co-operations with Japanese film studios during the 1960s (Yeh and Davis, 2002) and with the South Korean film industry during the 1980s (Hyun, 1998).

[18] There are two types of inter-Asian "friendship". The first type is "employment" – the East Asian media systems compete for regional visibility by scouting for and employing talents and elements from other East Asian media systems (Yeh and Davis, 2002; Tsai, 2005; K.-C. Lo, 2005; 2014). The second type is "joint production", teaming-up, especially in finance, to conquer both and even larger markets, such as pan-Asian or global markets (Wei, 2011). The first example involves inter-Asian flow of talents and formats. The best example of the second is *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000) that had multinational casting and a good box office in the US.

projects from Taiwan and Hong Kong are export-oriented. For the latter, which lack a large-scale home market, multinationally casted projects are intended to address overseas market demands whilst balancing their own domestic necessities. They need to consider how the two markets' value systems, including both similarities and differences, can be united. The similarities can be linked more easily while the differences are articulated in prioritisation of the more dominant side. Thus the end results will illustrate regionally shared values and the larger countries' own values as hegemony with small entities being articulated in subordination.

### 2.3.1 Domestic Factions, Regional Allies

The notion of (domestic) hegemony (in Taiwan) and (inter-Asian) articulation is even more important when analysing regional activities of idol drama. Taiwanese idol drama is a small and young TV industry that is based in Taiwan, a country of internal split. The split results from the relative decline of the Sino-centric nationalism of the KMT, which has been replaced by the competition of two domestic patriarchal nationalist forces (the KMT and the DPP). Had it not been the relative demise of the authoritarian political discourse from the KMT and the consequential deregulation of domestic media market, inter-Asian co-operation beyond nationalist control would not be so prevalent in Taiwanese TV production. Historically, Taiwan has been an area for encountering multiple forces in East Asia: it is "a site and a product of relations with other entities and areas in terms of culture, geography, history, politics, and economy" in the long term since centuries ago (Shih and Liao, 2015, pp.1-2). More recently, with political democratisation, cultural de-Sino-nationalisation and media liberalisation, Taiwanese society and culture are no longer shaped by the Sino-centrism. The contemporary Taiwanese society, being young and open, is becoming heterogeneous, diverse, decentralised, individualised and transnationally connected (Shih, 2003, p.146; Shih and Liao, 2015, p.1). Although there is a tendency for the local patriarchal nationalist ideology of the Taiwanese nation-building movement (of the DPP) to be getting more currency, this force does not yet monopolise the shaping of Taiwanese culture. The country's culture is again an open space of contestations. The individuals may ignore nationalist agenda and want to build their identities by making their own inter-Asian connections with other regional forces via media consumption. Or they may find ways to reconcile local and regional perspectives. Its cultural constitution is likely to be constantly contesting, non-crystallised, incomplete and indeterminate.

Yet the fact that Taiwanese society is democratised, decentralised and relatively distant from Sino-centrism does not mean it is free from ideological forces. It is still under hegemonic contestation between three patriarchal nationalistic forces (the KMT, the DPP and the CCP). Similarly, the deregulated TV industry is still heavily influenced by domestically competing discourses embedded in commercialism, selectively embracing particular sets of patriarchal nationalistic sentiments in order to make its dramas sellable and safe, domestically and regionally. With the country's social and cultural transition, its TV market, which is competed for by imports and domestics, has become fragmented into many sections. Domestic political-cultural forces might not dominate in the consumption market of TV drama. Domestic TV drama making can adopt globalised approaches, some of which take advantage of foreign elements such as from Japan and South Korea, especially those that are appealing to their target audiences. Inter-Asian strategies may push further the decentralisation of the formation of socio-cultural values and identity via TV dramas.

To analyse how the Taiwanese politics has affected idol dramas, I need to draw on Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of culture, in particular his concept of "the homology of fields" (1977; 1984; 1993). Bourdieu is mainly concerned with the social relations in class society and a homology between class relations and other sub-fields, such as culture (arts). The key point of field homology is that all fields are structurally determined by class relations. The pattern would be relayed to the field of consumption via the logics of practice (habitus) of specific classes. As for the field of symbolic cultural production, although different social groups would struggle to enter the field where each group would have its orientation and strategy (Garnham and Williams, 1980, p.215; Jenkins, 1992, p.86; Bourdieu, 1993; Johnson, 1993, p.6), the suppressed (e.g. working class in France and the UK) have difficulty entering a cultural field because of its lack of cultural and economic capital. Although this field would have relative autonomy, it would relay class politics via the unequal distribution and accumulation of economic and cultural capital. It is much easier for dominant social groups to do so, whilst minority groups usually fail to remain in the cultural fields. Thus entering the field, to keep it from the monopoly of dominant groups, is an important contestation practice for socially repressed groups.

Bourdieu's analysis of the cultural field also extends to its context. That means it demands the study of the set of social conditions of the production, circulation and consumption of symbolic products. The analysis encompasses the works themselves relationally within the space of

available possibilities and within the historical development of such possibilities, and the creators of works in terms of their strategies and trajectories, based on their class-specific habitus and their objective position within the field (Johnson, 1993, p.9). Structure of the cultural field is included naturally in the analysis.

The Bourdieu's theory concerning the relationally patterned dynamism in a cultural production field is insightful, yet demands modification to fit the particular Taiwanese patriarchal nationalist context. To illustrate the context and multiple bilateral articulations of agents in idol drama, I have created a spatial diagram. See Figure 2-1.

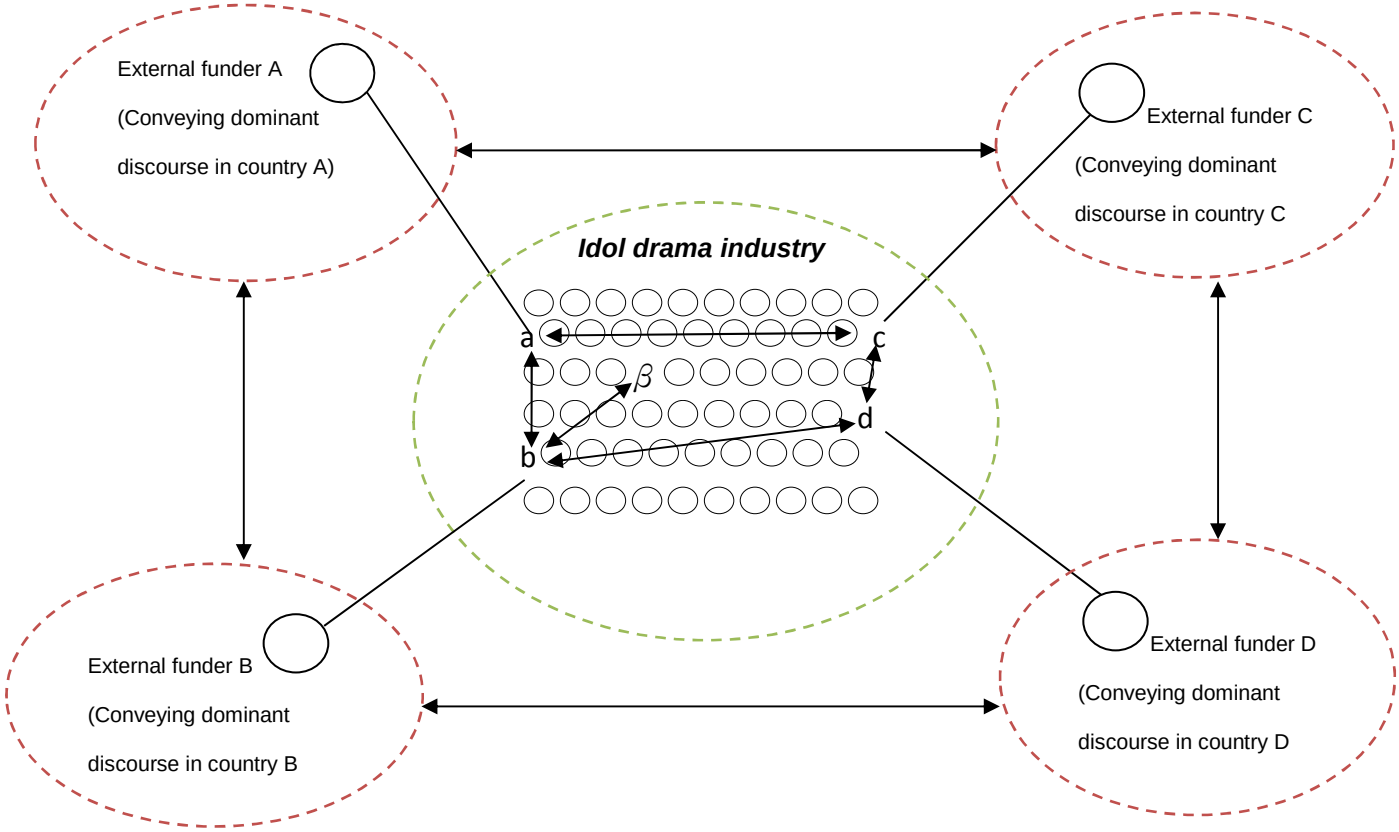


Figure 2-1 Politics of Inter-Asian Idol Drama Production
Double-sided arrow means a competition/contestation relation; Line is a linkage.

As Kuan-Hsing Chen (1998, pp.18-20; 2010, pp.92-94) notes, East Asia has had larger civilisations and little subjectivities. The patriarchal nationalist forces from different East Asian countries of different size and power (labelled as "A", "B", "C", "D", etc. in the diagram of Figure 2-1) are in their own "post-colonial condition". The countries are in infinite competition. Certainly, in a time of globalisation, they are no longer in the old frame of the Cold War, but they still vie for

regional and global influence or “soft power”. Yet global competition has made the governments’ domestic domination become relatively weak, confronting the trend of deregulation and market commercialism.

As commented in chapter 1.3, political factions in Taiwan tend to link to outside forces, and this arouses criticisms of their pro-American, pro-Japanese and pro-Chinese stances. Similarly, there is a structural homology between the politics and idol drama industry in the sense that an idol drama production company would have its own production orientation and strategy. The idol drama industry would have relative autonomy from politics, but the basic rules of Taiwanese politics would spread. A Taiwanese TV maker would also want to actively make inter-Asian linkage with, and take advantage of, a foreign market to gain more competitiveness.

This thesis views those TV production company leaders, who implement inter-Asian production, as “packagers”. Inspired from the term “package” used by Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh (2008) in their research on East Asian film co-productions, “packaging” refers to the packagers’ inter-Asian scouting and employing of resources and means of production from multiple East Asian countries, to produce regional cultural formations. The packagers would select the funders/forces whose value systems and demands are more acceptable to them. That is, they choose their allies – forming a set of “production relation” in one drama – and they may choose another ally in another drama. In the above diagram, I mark four such packagers, labelled as “a”, “b”, “c”, “d”. They actively select and link with the companies/market dealers from overseas markets. Each inter-Asian packager is an agent (e.g. “a”) and has its funder (e.g. “A”). These funder-packager linkages (“A-a”, “B-b”, “C-c”, “D-d”…) can be multiple. In this way, they not only contribute to the heterogeneity of Taiwanese idol drama but also keep their field in contestation. This model echoes Shih (2003, p.146), who maintains that Taiwan is becoming universally and transnationally connected and cannot be defined by a single national culture.

In this way, Taiwanese idol drama is an inter-Asian textual space for external forces to be configured and told. But the external funders do not forcefully “invade” this field since their participations are initiated by the Taiwanese packagers. As this production environment is commercial, the packagers tend to link with dealers in larger markets for funding. Therefore the linkage is hierarchically structured. The unity of packager and its external co-operating funder, or its “ally”, is a complex, hierarchical structure of “articulation”, in Stuart Hall’s term (Hall, 1986a, p.141; Grossberg, 1992, p.54; Slack, 1996, p.115). In light of the ideas Kuan-Hsing Chen (1998;

2010) mentioned earlier, we could argue that the values of the larger market dominate and is taken seriously by the Taiwanese packaging in the articulation. The Taiwanese idol drama project would decide to tailor to the tastes of the larger markets, such as the PRC and Japan. However, it is important to note that the main funders/distributors may not be identical to the actual audiences in those overseas markets. Rather, they can be regarded as gatekeepers who are rooted in their national discourses and control what their domestic audience can access. Therefore, the dominating forces deriving from these larger markets, including their ideological demands, value systems, TV industrial conventions and government regulations (e.g. censorships), influence and shape the funded Taiwanese projects through the articulations of the packagers.

As an inter-Asian packager links with an "acceptable" external force, cultural contestation is likely to take place outside rather than in the link between them.[19] The first visible cultural politics appear mainly and horizontally between two Taiwanese packagers, who link with two external forces. As illustrated above, the idol drama industry is an ensemble formed of numerous nodes – individual TV workers – who have their own production strategies that oppose those of others. The workers form companies, which are primary units in the industry. The companies compete for success, strive for legitimacy and oppose others in the market. For example, packager "a", who connects to the external funder "A", would be criticised by other groups (for instance groups: b, c, d…) as an "agent/proxy" of A or as the "traitor" of other factions of the Taiwanese TV industry. As such, the competition for legitimacy between the production companies is where the first conflict of cultural politics occurs. The packagers differ from each other, opposing the packaging style, funding market and external forces behind the other packagers. Thus this contestation takes the form of horizontal competition. The competition between packagers is also indirectly inter-Asian, because one packager is contesting against the influences of the foreign markets behind the other packagers.

The second type of cultural politics exists vertically between the administrative and creative sides inside a packaging production company. Senior workers can be seen as the nodal points that are financially stronger and senior in terms of career capital. They are more able to found a production company, to run projects, because of their richer and greater working funds,

[19] I do not mean that the two have no difference at all. They might still have some friction but the difference is slight.

connections, strength, work experience, especially market sensibility, etc. These leaders recruit and cast project-based staff and actors, who basically agree to the central principles and orientation of the contracted project and the company. In the diagram, such recruitment is seen as a connection between the junior (e.g. $\beta$) and senior nodes (e.g. b) of TV workers in the circle of the Taiwanese idol drama industry. By agreeing to "the terms and conditions" of their employment, the members become the extension of the leader in this project. Yet these members could still have creative divergency. This is usually because of the conflict between commercial pressure and personal, artistic concerns. The higher the administrative positions of TV workers, the more commercial pressure they bear. The employed members would be pressurised by the packager leaders. As such, the field of idol drama is an open-ended and complex ensemble where there are different levels of collaboration and contestation.

### 2.3.2 Articulating Self with Ally

Since East Asia is composed of several patriarchal, nationalist and capitalist regimes that are shaping their nationals and competing for regional historiography, their difference indicates the existence of many imagined worlds. The inter-Asian packagers do not simply reproduce the discourses rooted in the imagined worlds they link with in their dramas. The dramas are characterised by "dual concerns" (Hitchcock, 2002, p.68): that is, the drama markers will identify, reconcile and negotiate in the actual production sites, the similar and different values and identities between the Taiwanese and external forces, whilst articulating shared elements among these differences. Yet different makers will "absorb and translate" (Ma, 1999, p.167) the determinate factors in their own ways and produce different outcomes. Each packager/external partner linkage forms a particular TV discourse in the Taiwanese TV field. The packaging team must successfully address these external funders' main interests and reconcile them with their own Taiwan-specific preferences, even though they already share a few similarities. In addition to foreign funders, they articulate the taste and ideological discourses of targeted external markets (sometimes the funder differs from the targeted market). The articulations embodied by the fictional narratives and characters might draw on personal experience, perception and approach based on the producer's own life context and the production resources in hand. The articulations only possess "relative autonomy" because they depend on powers of and are constrained by the

dominant value systems, so the ultimate counter-discourse could not appear in these elaborations. In that way, the production company is seen as the local agent of the external force in Taiwanese TV culture/market, articulating and disseminating the latter's values and agendas.

#### 2.3.2.1 Juxta-political Articulations

Concerning international and geo-political relations, idol dramas are inclined to mediate "peace" as their main cross-cultural theme, while art-house and male-centred genres display a sense of opposition and rivalry (Hitchcock, 2002; Lo, 2005; Dasgupta, 2013). The latter tends to put national antagonism in the narrative centre, articulating East Asian nationalist differences from one perspective and signifying the existence of irresolvable conflict. Regarding this, Kwai-Cheung Lo (2005, p.154) believes that the latter exactly captures the current relation of the East Asian patriarchal nationalists.

> I believe it is the basis on which the complex representation of Asia is founded. In the process of striving to represent Asia, there is always a signifier-without-a-signified that carries no determinate meaning. This empty signifier of Asia stands for the presence of meaning as such. The horizon of representing Asia is wide open for film-makers to engage in a hegemonic struggle in order to produce new contingent meanings and shifting identities for the region.

Art-house and male-centred genres make it clear that the one-sided perspective and non-consensual characters are exactly the East Asian reality. Yet commercial and female-oriented films and TV dramas simplify and present reconciliation juxta-politically. Firstly, they tend to set national politics on a secondary level, negotiating national politics with romantic love stories. These media products are centred on romantic discourses and, more precisely, the female consumers' desires and fantasies. Why is a commercial product targeting women more inclined to mediate regional peace?

To answer this, American feminist scholar Lauren Berlant's insight is helpful. Berlant (2008) examines how American white female writers address American political, national, racial and cultural issues. She notes that women's literature and film (and by extension, TV drama) form a female "intimate public (sphere)" which belongs to the larger women's culture that is one of the most thriving public spheres (Ibid, p.viii). The intimate female public is structured by market forces and consists of cultural and media consumption and circulation, which help the members of this public sphere to develop a shared world view and emotional knowledge. The sphere emotionally mediates, recognises and expresses the lives of women and where they belong. Therefore, Berlant understands an female intimate public as "a porous, affective scene of identification

among strangers that promises a certain experience of belonging and provides a complex of consolation, confirmation, discipline, and discussion about how to live" (Ibid, p.viii).

Conventionally, it has been argued that female-oriented dramas have shown a clear refusal to refer to social and political issues in its central themes. Also, they seem more confusing as they usually treat national conflicts as background in which love overcomes barriers, unlike male-oriented political films. Berlant does not agree with the argument about the apoliticalness of female drama. She sees the women's drama as "an aesthetic structure of affective expectation" which "locates real life in the affective capacity to bracket many kinds of structural and historical antagonism on behalf of finding a way to connect with the feeling of belonging to a larger world" (Ibid, p.4). This genre cultivates fantasies of vague belonging as an alleviation of what is hard to manage in the antagonism of real life, compromised intimacies and the attrition of life. Utopianism is its main principle and one of the main utopias is patriarchal heterosexual normativity. Therefore, this genre has a characteristic of being "juxta-political" (Ibid, p.3). It "flourishes in proximity to the political because the political is deemed an elsewhere managed by elites who are interested in reproducing the conditions of their objective superiority, not in the well-being of ordinary people or life-worlds" (Ibid). In such female worlds, politics is often seen as a "field of threat, chaos, degradation or re-traumatisation" rather than a good promising possibility, as "politics requires active antagonism" (Ibid, p.11).

The female drama occasionally crosses over to the political or does some politics, but most often it acts as a critical chorus that sees "the expression of emotional response and conceptual recalibration as achievement enough" (Ibid, p.x). When the female genre touches politics, it often demonstrates compassionate liberalism. Observing how American middle-class white female writers write on ethno-racial issues in the US, Berlant argues that these female writers have the ideology of "white universalist paternalism, sometimes dressed as maternalism", mobilising post-racist fantasy, usually in melodramatic cultural conventions (Ibid, p.6). The romantic conventions are adapted to imagine "a non-hierarchical social world that is post-racist and 'at heart' democratic because good intention and love flourish in it" (Ibid).

Berlant's account of the expressions of American white female writers is very inspiring, though in need of adaptation into East Asian geo-political cultural politics. As East Asian patriarchal nationalists are keen to construct the ethno-national identities for their competition over regional influence, East Asian TV workers might wrestle with national conflict and ask for

regional harmony in a juxta-political fashion. In his examination of *About Love* (2005), a female-oriented movie that consists of three filmlets set in Tokyo, Taipei and Shanghai and was released in 2005 when political relations between Japan and PRC and between PRC and Taiwan were at a low point, Romit Dasgupta (2013) argues that the film is a feminised/romance-inflected account of regional dynamics. The account is motivated by the agency, desire and fantasy for inter-Asian romantic encounters of female consumers in the three societies, dominantly from urban middle-classes who have consumed popular culture from the other countries since 1990s; it counters the official patriarchal nationalistic discourses by staging compatible and understanding encounters (Dasgupta, 2013, p.119). It is hence a filmic space in which the female audiences in PRC, Taiwan and Japan can articulate their emotions and anxieties about worsening inter-state relations (Ibid, p.127). The female-oriented products in the accounts of Berlant and Dasgupta similarly portray a desire to transcend the opposition between political and ethno-national forces. This may be particularly true for East Asian female-oriented films and TV dramas, including Taiwanese idol drama.

Even though inter-Asian idol dramas interact with geo-political nationalist tensions with their peaceful provisional resolutions, they might still be checked by the dominant forces that aspire to nationalise media space, noted by Lori D. Hitchcock (2002, p.68). This is due to nation-states having their own official discourses and imaginations, but individuals and social groups today have their own imagined worlds which are distancing them from nationalist officialdom. The different “imagined worlds” are constructed by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups in the world (Appadurai, 1990, p.7). They contradict and contest each other and sometimes subvert official imaginations. The imagined worlds and the imagination are new social practices to stage collective aspirations through the images (Ibid, pp.4-5). The female imagination, which might be transnational or even non-national, would be marginalised by more than two patriarchal nationalist discourses in the home market, and in the receiving country remain a more minor discursive position. The contestation of the imagination determines not only the border-crossing reception but also domestic reception of the inter-Asian dramas. This is why many inter-Asian commercial packagings are more historically generic in the textual level, avoiding conflicts, because of the difficulty in overcoming the differences between the historically situated imaginations of East Asian nationalists. This will be discussed in chapter 5.

Alternatively, the articulations may neglect these irresolvable conflicts which are too difficult to overcome in the articulation, e.g. they only attend to social and gender articulations, neglecting national relationships. With regard to how these packaging teams articulate the self and ally, I got an insight from Robin Wood's account of how American genre film-makers elaborate and interact with ideological differences between dominant and subordinate social groups (1977, pp.671-672). Wood says that individual film-makers would have different strategies to mediate and deal with ideological tensions, and provide resolutions in drama narratives from their own life experience and personality. What is of interest is Wood's account that commercial films would attempt to produce "ideologically neutral" films (neglect of particular differences, even conflicts and tensions). Wood believes that although these films try to offer the simplest and most archetypal scenes, these efforts to produce ideologically pure films are in vain because of the unlikeness of neutrality. This argument is germane to my interest in the idol dramas' interaction with East Asian cultural differences as the packagers work with the rule of genres and might shun some irresolvable conflicts. I will discuss this in detail in chapter 5. Gradually the inter-Asian media co-operation would be less interested in communicating through engagement with historical and cultural issues, but would prefer elemental and generic stories in an archetypal setting. As major productions are usually dominated by mainstream national ideologies and narrative conventions, minor projects are more art-oriented and tend to counter the former. For this reason, Koichi Iwabuchi (2009; 2010a) and Fang-chih Irene Yang (2013) are sceptical about the commercial and female-oriented regional media co-operations because they are likely to ignore ethnic, gender and socio-economic minorities, no matter what cross-cultural images are produced.

#### 2.3.2.2 Social and Gender Values

Steve Fore (1993) argues that the agrarian Confucian patriarchy that previously permeated the region has now mixed with capitalist patriarchy in East Asia. The women of East Asian countries may "find themselves bracketed by their society's blend of traditional and capitalist value systems, both of which are founded on patriarchal ideologies" (Ibid, p.66). The street movements of feminists (Sang, 1999, pp.134-135) and tranquil movement of women via consumption, education and participation of workplace, have changed women, who now have different desires and ideas. As the notion of hegemony indicates, the Confucian and capitalist patriarchal value systems self-modify when addressing female contestation, so as to gain consent. Today, East Asian women

go out to work to realise themselves in the workplace, but they are still expected to take care of family as mothers and wives, according to the updated contemporary patriarchal social expectations. Yet, conflict exists in the new codes for it is very difficult to manage the two tasks (Lin and Tong, 2008, pp.111-114).

In media analysis, one key question would be whether the (inter-Asian) female-oriented idol dramas (in the meta-narrative) offer a contemporary myth that is complicit with contemporary East Asian capitalist patriarchy, or have they developed alternative viewpoints, e.g. revealing the internal contradiction? Over the last few decades, Western feminists have turned their attention to the display of women as sexual objects on screen and spectator's identification (Mulvey, 1975; 1981). Later they tackled the exploration of the masculine and feminine viewpoints and values delivered in female-oriented filmic works. Previous feminist film scholars deduced two types of filmic (and by extension, TV drama) narrations for women (Cook, 1983; Kaplan, 1993). The first type of narrations of female subjects in films (and by extension, TV drama) is coined by E. Ann Kaplan (1993, p.13) "women's melodrama". The narration has women in the centre but is patriarchal in ideology. This approach claims to be the female voice, but in fact conforms to patriarchal capitalist ideology and enunciates from a patriarchal position. The second type, "women's films", refers to those resisting the patriarchal framing of women by positing female desire and subjectivity. Nonetheless the feminist scholarship argues that the relationship between masculine and feminine viewpoints is not clear-cut in female genres (Cook, 1983, pp.252-253). "Real" feminine viewpoints do not exist. This is because these female genres soften sexual difference and merge masculinity and femininity. Thus both male and female viewpoints would coexist in the female-oriented dramas and a pure expression of the female voice is unlikely to exist.

Post-colonial feminists on female-oriented films and TV also distinguish critical articulations with the post-colonial patriarchal nationalists and those conforming to the latter (Fore, 1993; Shih, 2007; L. Wang, 2011). Ethnic Chinese feminists call the critical films addressing contradictions, "women's cinema". These post-colonial female-oriented films and TV also illustrate "a sense of feminist paternalism" (Abu-Lughod, 2004, p.91). Although this distinction between "women's

melodrama" and "women's film" or "cinema" needs more examination,[20] the distinction is useful to guide my analysis of inter-Asian idol dramas. As argued, that the new key issue for contemporary East Asian women is whether the conflict around new social expectations for women is reflexively revealed and addressed, I would like to keep the division of "women's melodrama" and "women's film" but slightly update their definitions to my concerns. Within the division, I will examine whether the idol dramas "offer merely utopian myth for women from patriarchal discourse" (this is my meaning of women's melodrama), or whether they "reveal internal conflict" (as in women's films).

## 2.4 Conclusion

Inputting the Western and East Asian critical academic arguments, we can roughly estimate how the Taiwanese female-oriented idol dramas articulate national, class and gender discourses that intersect with each other. Firstly, these articulations might be symbolically reduced to dramatic representations of the interactions of two sexes and ethnicities in the narratives. Secondly, inter-Asian female-oriented dramas from small countries such as Taiwan tend to ambiguously conform to the dominant value systems of larger and stronger countries because through funding and marketing, the values of dramas are shaped indirectly by the larger countries. Drama makers in smaller countries have also been affected by multiple value systems from powerful countries in the formation of their own socio-cultural values and identities, and consequently in production strategies. This is exactly what the globalised Taiwanese culture is becoming through inter-Asian linkages. Since the regional gender value systems remain heterogeneous, the more markets the Taiwanese packagers have, the more multiple value axes Taiwan will link with in this new global age. The products have their own political, economic and ideologically value-laden creative conditions so that critical researches should examine the different media linkages, their criticality, and the operation of hegemonic ideologies within, through comparative research (Tsai and Shin, 2013, p.9).

[20] Between the two categories exists a space of mild critique that usually appears in less commercial products possessing light-hearted feminist sentimentalism (Zhang, 2011, p.105) whose boundary between "conformity" and "criticality" is subjective, depending on the contexts of interpretation.

# Chapter 3 Methodology

To probe into the production side of idol drama, its politics and its textual articulations, I adopted multiple methods including an analysis of secondary data (news reports and industry data), a long-term observation of the industry and a series of in-depth interviews with key industrial workers, as well as textual analysis of idol drama stories. The first section of this chapter reviews my doctoral research journey, the questions employed and the methods used. It traces my interactions with idol drama workers before and during my research. I reflect on why I became interested in this industry. I will then examine my initial opinions and framework, which were challenged by the findings from the interviews, and discuss how I revised these initial presumptions.

The second part of the chapter reflects on the textual method used to critique idol drama's ideological imaginations. I followed ideological criticism based on a semiotic and ideological analysis of fictional narratives in film and TV and cited previous East Asian film studies that also take up the criticism.

## 3.1 Participant Observation and In-depth Interview

### 3.1.1 Preparation before PhD Study

Living in a time when TV drama became central to many women whose daily lives were saturated by media, I became interested in it, especially its place as a domestic industry in the society of which I was a part, as well being intrigued by its potential influence on the public. In 2004, I enrolled on a master's degree programme in Mass Communication. I analysed the shift of the production of Chinese-language classical and historical TV drama from Taiwan to the PRC. Postgraduate study was a good reason for me to start contacting people who were working in the Taiwanese TV industry. I did not find many people from the generation which made Chinese-language classical historical dramas for Taiwanese TV, since most of them had moved to the PRC in the 2000s. Instead, I met many people who were making idol dramas and developed two important links.

My first link was with Virginia Liu, whom I interviewed in 2004 for an essay required by a module of my course. Producers tend to be difficult to reach for interview mainly because their workload is so heavy that they tend to decline interviews that do not benefit them immediately,

and student researchers have no useful connections. I did not know Liu and had no connection with her. I just called her company and requested an interview. To my surprise, she agreed to it because she was willing to give students like me a chance. I interviewed her again for another term paper in 2005.

My second link was with a small group of idol drama scriptwriters, S1, S2 and S4, who had worked for Angie Chai a few years during the 2000s. These scriptwriters became the most accessible figures to outsiders via the Internet because they worked with computers and started blogging at that time, and I was an "outsider", in the sense that I did not study TV and film production skills at university and had little connection to the industry. In 2006, I was particularly drawn to the blogs of S1 and S4, the writers of *Silence*, an idol drama produced by Chai. Of course, these blogs have ceased now due to the rapid transition of social media and I cannot provide links that reveal their names here due to anonymity concerns. *Silence* packaged Taiwanese, Hong Kong, PRC and South Korean cast and characters with a narration from a Taiwanese ideological viewpoint. Therefore it caught my attention. When the drama was aired by CTV in 2006, it was considered by its staff a success, as evidenced by its Taiwanese feedback, more than many other PRC-Taiwanese co-produced idol dramas at the time (S1 and S2, personal communication, Feb 4, 2013, p.20). The writers' blogs became popular among Taiwanese fans of *Silence*. S1 was particularly active on her blog and *Silence*'s online forum, spending much time interacting with the audiences, including me. She even organised a fan meeting after *Silence* came to an end. S1 also invited her fans to walk out in political protests at that time. I attended some of the protests with her.

My interview with Liu in 2004 was not successful in the sense that my questions, which mainly concerned the industrial relations between production companies and TV networks, could not elicit substantial answers from Liu. I made two mistakes in the interview that unfortunately diverted from the subject-matter. The first mistake was that I did not sufficiently study the political economic aspect of Taiwanese TV industry beforehand. The second was that I did not focus on the work experiences of TV drama makers in my questions. My second interview with her in 2005 was not very successful, either, due to the same reasons. Thus, I became very cautious about doing interviews. Before my PhD research I hardly conducted any interviews, except one with S1 in 2007 about her work experience in the making of *Silence*. Most of the time, I observed Taiwanese TV workers, listened to and talked to them, and took notes afterwards.

There have been diverse approaches to media studies and various theoretical tools for the study of contemporary mass media. These approaches can be very roughly grouped into two paradigms that centre firstly on criticism and interpretation of media texts, and secondly on the ownership of media institutions (Taylor and Willis, 1999). The first paradigm draws on literary and film studies that focus on the interpretation of works and texts (Taylor and Willis, 1999). In the second paradigm, scholars in critical political economy of communication analyse the institution of media production (Mosco, 2009).

TV audience studies have notably been influenced by the ethnographic approach that stresses "thick (as opposed to thin) description" of meanings and that the meanings should be perceived "from the native (audience's) point of view" (Geertz, 1973, pp.13-15; Morley, 1992, pp.179-180). Anthropology also crosses over to the study of media production. In the mid-twentieth century, American anthropologists started expanding their academic interests to Hollywood, conducting ethnographies on the movie industry (Ortner, 2010). The work I did then and following my research shared much with the fundamental elements of ethnography; for instance, I myself was the most important research tool for my study; my personal knowledge very much determined my research agenda; I conducted interviews and collected press coverage of idol drama myself. Nevertheless, I do not claim that my research is an ethnography of idol drama industry as my research questions, which concern cultural and ideological contestations and articulations in a multi-polar world, are also beyond the remit of classical ethnographic concern. The research is rooted in the academic paradigm of media and cultural studies and attempts to move one step further by adopting an ethnographic approach to idol drama production.

My own practice was similar to what is coined in the anthropological academia by Laura Nader as "studying up", in this case in an industry that has a relatively enclosed boundary in its productions of images for mass audience and at the same time enjoys public influence (Nader, 1969 cited in Ortner, 2010, p.218). The notion of "studying up" implies a hierarchical relation between a researcher in a relatively low position and a researched object that is above the researcher. The researcher would clearly sense the relationship when face to face with recognised and influential film-makers. Later, Sherry B. Ortner (2010, p.221) – an anthropologist who has studied Hollywood – suggests a new term: "studying sideways". The term means that media workers are not completely in opposition to academic scholars like her and other

anthropology researchers/teachers. Instead, there has been interface between academia and the media workers.

The idol drama industry in Taiwan is one such entity. It is a relatively secretive and enclosed industrial community formed of companies (TV stations and production companies), freelance actors, directors, writers, publicity producers and journalists, the latter being half insiders and half outsiders. Research scholars in Media and Communication affiliated to the university may be linked to the industry through their students who make their careers in the industry, but compared to journalists, and university-researchers such as these, who are familiar with the industry, I had limited access to those at the top and was badly lacking professional training. I was mostly "studying up" in my interaction with idol drama workers.

What I conducted during these years was coined by Ortner as "interface ethnography". Ortner (2010, p.218) argues that Hollywood movie industry provides publicity information and public events that are an interface between the industry and the public, and that the information in the interface awaits critical analysis. She suggested conducting participant observation in the industry's public events (promotion expos, press conferences, etc.): this is "interface ethnography". After these public events the researcher approaches informants for an in-depth interview. This is fundamental to investigation, a preparation for further steps which would mean participating as an observer. Since I was interested in Taiwanese TV industry I should acquire an understanding of it, or even try to participate as a worker. Meeting Taiwanese TV professionals at such an interface as they talked to the audience was vital since it was perhaps only at these moments were they ready to talk to and respond to people.

### 3.1.2 Officially Entering the Field, More Networking

#### 3.1.2.1 Selecting Informants

My previous interview with S1 was the catalyst that ignited my interest in the national and gender politics of idol drama. My work experience with Virginia Liu also pushed my attention towards its inter-Asian operation. After entering PhD research, I proposed to examine the regional development of idol drama with two main questions: the creative tensions in production over the control of the production process regarding creative and cultural aspects, informed by literature on politics in American and Japanese media industries (Negus, 2002; Lukacs, 2010) and on East Asian film co-operations and their cross-cultural representations (Hitchcock, 2002; Yeh and Davis,

2002; Lo, 2005; Pang, 2005; Davis and Yeh, 2008; Yeh, 2010a; b). I drafted preliminary interview questions centred on the initiation of specific TV dramas and particularly important issues such as the creative tensions and difficulties the workers encountered during the production processes. Based on my understanding of the idol drama industry, I identified four important production companies of idol drama (their producers listed in parenthesis). The four groups were the Comic Ritz Production Co. Ltd. (led by Angie Chai); the Comic International Production Co. Ltd. (led by Jerry Feng) which had been in affiliation to Gala TV Station since 2005; the Power Generation Entertainment Co. Ltd. (led by Virginia Liu); and the Prajna Works Entertainment Co. Ltd. (led by Tsai Yueh-Hsun). These companies had organised their own inter-Asian packaging strategies, as opposed to the localism strategies. They had at different times expanded their networks for their drama-making businesses in three directions (PRC, Japan and South Korea). They pioneered and thus could provide richer experiences than other companies that followed to adopt similar strategies.

At the centre of my interview list were members of staff of the four groups that were identified by myself through their TV dramas' opening and closing credits, including freelance people who had worked for them. In mid-November 2012, I resumed my "interface ethnography", attending public talks given by the key people on my interview list or very significant events that specified an inter-Asian co-operation. Table 3.1 below illustrates the public events I attended during that time.

Table 3-1 Events that I attended during November 2012 and July 2013

| No | Event | Time and Venue | Key Speaker(s) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | A fan meeting of S1 for her TV drama released in 2012 | Nov 11, 2012<br>(Information is selectively shown) | S1 |
| 2. | A public forum on film and TV scriptwriting | Nov 29, 2012<br>(Information is selectively shown) | S1<br>S3<br>Chu Yu-Ning |
| 3. | A public forum on cross-Strait filmic co-operation (held by Taiwan Original Filmmakers Union) | Dec 1, 2012<br>14–17pm<br>Taipei Zhongshan Hall (Guangfu Auditorium) | 16 Taiwanese film-makers, critics, and scholars, including Chu Yen-Ping, Li Hsing, etc. |
| 4. | A public talk by S1 and B3 | Dec 7, 2012 | S1 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | (Information is selectively shown) | B3 |
| 5. | Public forum of the 2012 National Taiwan University Film Festival – Film digitisation and the film-making/viewing of mass audience | Dec 12, 2012<br>18.30pm<br>Auditorium, B1, Second Student Activity Centre, National Taiwan University | Chu Yu-Ning |
| 6. | Public forum of the 2012 National Taiwan University Film Festival – The art of film marketing, Taiwanese film-making trend and renaissance | Dec 21, 2012<br>18.30pm<br>Auditorium, B1, Second Student Activity Centre, National Taiwan University | Tsai Yueh-Hsun |
| 7. | A public talk by S1 | Jul 25, 2013<br>(Information is selectively shown) | S1 |

I was not able to choose "participant observation" at the production process of idol dramas since many of the dramas I wished to analyse had already completed their productions, and ongoing co-produced idol dramas were usually kept top secret by their producers. For instance, I knew from a film/TV director S7 there were several Taiwanese-Japanese co-operations under planning, but he declined to reveal them (personal communication, March 15, 2013, p.8). Besides, it was difficult to observe the TV drama productions that had become very mobile (involving multiple and even regionalised locales) and virtual (many decisions were made by telephones, etc.). These workers usually visited different locations and communicated through email and phone, as Angela McRobbie (2000) notes. I returned to in-depth interviews and retuned my interview questions to be oriented to working experience.

All the individuals who have interacted with me over these years, or participated in my thesis, are my "informants" – an ethnographic term for "interviewee" (Ortner, 2010). I choose the term as being especially relevant because my interviews involved the culture of idol drama making (the culture of their professional world) about which they are knowledgeable. Adopting this word, I aim to emphasise their knowledge about the production culture of idol drama.

Difficulties occurred even after much preparation. My first decision was whether I should increase the scope of my interviews and interview workers outside the four groups mentioned above. As previously noted, they were representative, but they were not the only ones. Taiwanese

TV had had diverse transnational engagements with non-Taiwanese media companies. There had been many companies that made mainly PRC-Taiwanese co-productions, which usually employed South Korean actors. Since 2011, many Japanese media enterprises had co-operated with Taiwanese companies at the level of funding and technical support, in addition to the already existing trade in programmes (Li, 2011; P2, personal communication, Feb 20, 2013, pp.11-12; B2, personal communication, Feb 26, 2013, p.2; Yu, 2014).

My second problem was that my upgrade paper did not distinguish between inter-Asian operations either at the production level or the narrative level. It conflated them with the term "regionalised/Asianised drama". I did not group the TV dramas into different categories because some of them intended to be geo-politically generic might still possess evidence of cross-cultural traces. For instance, Tsai Yueh-Hsun's *Black and White* was intended to present a generic Chinese-speaking society, but it still has North Korean elements in its narration and thus involves a Taiwanese viewpoint.

The problems caused two main difficulties: first, I was unsure how much I should broaden my interview list and, second, what should be my analytical objects in my textual analysis chapter. Consequently, I did not select my research objects properly. I sought to examine only the dramas made by Taiwanese producers that cast South Korean actors and temporarily called them "regionalised TV dramas" in my upgrade paper. The dramas that cast South Korean stars were indeed important but the range excluded dramas that have Japanese and PRC actors/fundings. "Regionalisation" could varyingly mean "regional expansion" or "regionalised in production level" so the term and the scope of selection of drama cases caused confusion to me and my informants in my early interviews.

Resolving the problems was a part of my research and solving them was exactly what I would contribute to scholarship. As the four companies mentioned above best fit in my research objectives, I decided to spend most of my time seeking interviews with them first, collecting news reports about any non-local dramas in both production and narrative levels, and interviewing other workers beyond the four production companies if I had such chances. Japanese companies Amuse Soft and SPO that started investing in Taiwanese TV dramas had made it clear that they

were entering Taiwanese idol drama making for regional expansion on their official websites.[21] I did not interview the companies as it was not my priority.

During my interviews, I used ordinary terms that my informants could understand, such as "operation at international or regional scale", "international connection/co-operation", or "pan-Asian operation". After finishing my fieldwork, I finally chose to use "inter-Asian packaging" to loosely sum them up. I finally was able to demarcate them by their packaging styles. I also was able to distinguish the dramas that were aimed to be generic, despite some fitfully remaining geo-political accounts (represented by Tsai and Feng in my chapter 5) from the other dramas that were aimed to be cross-cultural in their diegesis (best exemplified by packagers and their packagings analysed in chapter 6). Following my definition of inter-Asian packaging, I decided to broaden the ideological analysis in chapter 6 on dramas that are inter-Asian in their diegesis. They broadly include the dramas that have either the PRC, Japanese or South Korean elements since my definition of "inter-Asian packaging" now refers to various bilateral or trilateral co-operations of Taiwanese idol drama with overseas media industries. I will discuss that later in the second section of the current chapter.

#### 3.1.2.2 Engaging informant Interests and Gaining Trusts

Engaging potential informants in my research was crucial to me in order to obtain interviews. I actively made diverse contacts in snowball sampling among my connections. I approached some of my informants through "gatekeeper" organisations. I also approached some of them through social media and public forums. I participated in the informants' Facebook pages. I attended all public talks of people who I identified could be my informants during my fieldwork. These public events could to some extent answer my research questions, but they were important more for enabling me to make contacts in person and to request in-depth interviews. When I could not approach potential informants myself directly, I approached them through my personal connections. When I contacted the informants, I attached an interview request letter, an information sheet and a consent form, alongside my interview questions, which I tailored towards their needs. I engaged their attention by stressing this research being the first PhD thesis that

[21] Available at: http://www.spoinc.jp/company/taiwan-rerease20121206.pdf [Accessed 19 February 2013] and at: http://ir.amuse.co.jp/english/company/message.html [Accessed 14 March 2013].

would concentrate on the idol drama industry in the era after *Meteor Garden*. I wanted them to know that this study was more about what happened in their moving on from the influential *Meteor Garden*.

I attended first the promotion event of a TV drama produced by S1, who now owned a production company. We had kept in contact since 2007 and she knew that I had started doing a PhD in London. At the event, I was only able to say hi to her in the crowd, and inform her that I had come back to Taiwan for research.

The second event was a public forum on film and TV scriptwriting on 29 November 2012 in which S1 and another scriptwriter S3 were two of the six speakers. This was the first time I had met S3, whom I had asked to become a "friend on Facebook" in the mid-2012 after watching her TV drama *Alice in Wonder City* in London on the Internet. Now a star producer and scriptwriter with a TV drama on air, S1 was very busy and had difficulty arranging a time for my interview. Also, she was so famous that she had to be careful about giving interviews so as not to risk tainting her relations with the industry by seeming to be critical. After the forum came to the end I mentioned to S1 about my research's key question focusing on cultural politics in the idol drama industry. But she declined my request. She also asked why I could not use the material she had talked to me about previously. Responding to her refusal, I asked her if she could perhaps decide after reading my interview questions. I explained to her in person and via email about the ethical regulation that I could only use newly collected material. So, although initially declining my interview request, S1 finally agreed to be interviewed. S1 also wanted to be interviewed together with S2. I contacted S2 on Facebook to find that he also wanted to be interviewed with S1.

At the end of the second event, I also approached S3 and introduced myself. She answered briefly my question as to why *Alice in Wonder City* has a Japanese daughter to a Taiwanese mother by explaining her feelings about Taiwanese post-colonial relations with Japan. Then her attention shifted to a few young women in the crowd, whom she encouraged to join the scriptwriting association for which she worked as vice secretary-general. As a member of the association, I thought that I could contact her and share with her my ideas about the association. These involved the association collecting and documenting information on its writers for its website as well as putting up interviews. This step seemingly digressed from my research but it helped create more interaction with her. I emailed S3 a few days later in December about the ideas. S3 quickly responded my email and asked to have a further discussion. We met in a coffee

shop in Gongguan, Taipei. She told me that the ideas about the association were far beyond its limit and wanted me to get PhD first. At the end of this meeting I asked her for an interview and she agreed to do it in the January of 2013.

I had two routes to reach senior managers in GTV for interviews. My ideal informants were the previous and current heads of GTV's drama and public relations departments. My first approach was the telephone; I phoned a person who worked in GTV and who had exchanged business cards with me in 2007 and asked for an interview. But the person told me he no longer worked in GTV and suggested I contact his former female colleague who was still working in GTV. In due course I called this woman for an interview. She agreed to my request and I sent her via email my interview questions and information sheet/consent form. However, I did not interview her in the end.

My second approach was different. I went to a public event on 7 December 2012. The event was dedicated to a TV drama which was a country-wide sensation when it was broadcast in Taiwan in 2011. The drama was penned by S1, produced by former GTV's head of drama department, in charge of many idol dramas funded by GTV in the 2000s decade, and funded by GTV. My plan was to talk to GTV's managers and the former head. Consequently, when the event came to a conclusion, I introduced myself to B3 (GTV's head of marketing and public relations) and the former head. I told the latter that we were Facebook friends and we shared some friends. A few days later, I emailed her, requesting an interview. She kindly declined my interview request, explaining she was not conducting regional co-productions at the moment, but she gave me the contact way of the vice CEO of GTV (B1). My research about the regional operation of idol drama might possibly help justify the strategy of GTV, so B1 agreed to my request. As our interview was very short, I asked if I could interview the heads of drama production and marketing/public relations of GTV. B1 accepted my request, asking his secretary to arrange interviews with B2 and B3 for me. I did not contact the lady of GTV mentioned earlier.

I contacted Tsai Yueh-Hsun in person at the National Taiwan University Film Festival's one of three public forums in December 2012. The forums featured Taiwanese film-makers, two of whom were also idol drama producer-directors Chu Yu-Ning and Tsai Yueh-Hsun. Tsai's session on 21 December 2012 was about how to market Taiwanese films in the future. I sat in the front row before Tsai on the floor. When the forum ended I approached Tsai, introduced myself and

gave him my interview recruitment letter, interview questions and information sheet/consent form. He kindly asked me to arrange a time with his personal assistant.

I tried to contact some people at Comic International through two routes, the first of which was through B1's secretary who could not settle a time for my interview. I also tried to pass my interview recruitment letter and information sheet/consent form to the company via my writer friends, who worked there, and received no response. Finally, I reached S7, one of the two directors for *Gangster's Bakery* produced by Comic International via Dr Robert Ru-shiuo Chen, S7's teacher during his postgraduate study.

Unfortunately, Comic Ritz was going through a major crisis at the end of 2012 and it announced that it was stopping its production of idol drama (Chao, 2012; C.-F. Yang, 2013). S4 gave me the mobile phone number of the head of drama production at Comic Ritz but the person declined my interview request with the excuse that she no longer worked there and was therefore unable to answer my questions. She gave me the contact phone number of S5, a scriptwriter working for Angie Chai for many years. I told S4 that I wanted to interview Angie Chai but she declined to ask Chai for me. S4 told me that I should try myself because she had once successfully helped another researcher to interview Chai, and she could not ask another favour from Chai. Then I told S4 that I also wished to talk to EP2, an executive producer at Comic Ritz for many years. S4 agreed to contact EP2 for me and luckily, EP2 agreed to my interview request.

I emailed Virginia Liu about an interview. She was very busy and wondered why I could not use her previous interviews. We finally held the interview in late March 2013. I also interviewed EP1, who was my work colleague previously, in July 2013. As well as interviewing individuals connected to the four idol drama producers mentioned above, I also contacted two individuals who did not work for them but produced TV dramas that employed South Korean actors and had PRC funding/co-operation. I told my writer friend that I also wanted to interview S6, who penned *Love at Aegean Sea*. The friend contacted S6 and gave me S6's email and phone number. S6 then helped me contact drama producer P3 who produced *Amor de Tarapaca* (2004), a TV drama that was co-operated by Taiwanese and PRC TV companies/stations and employed a South Korean actor. In total, I had fourteen interviews with fifteen TV workers who were either producers who owned their own production companies, or executive producers in the companies, freelance scriptwriters, freelance directors, or senior managers at a TV station. Five of them were male and ten female. They had all had inter-Asian work experiences.

The interviews were conducted from January to March and in July 2013. All of my informants were interviewed only once during this period, some of whom answered my subsequent questions via email. The interviews mostly lasted between 1.5 and 2 hours. Three lasted more than 3 hours and three were only up to 1 hour in length.

Table 3-2 List of informants

| No | Name code (gender: M/F) | Position and work history | Interview date |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | B1(M) | Vice Chief Executive of Operation of Gala TV Station (GTV). He is in charge of the operation of the whole TV company which has produced and released many inter-Asian idol dramas since early 2000s. | Jan 31, 2013 |
| 2. | B2(F) | Head of drama programming of GTV, overseeing all drama productions, including idol dramas. | Feb 26, 2013 |
| 3. | B3(F) | Head of marketing and public relations of GTV, in charge of domestic idol drama promotions and functioning as company spokesperson in Taiwan. | Feb 26, 2013 |
| 4. | P1(F) | Virginia Liu, leader of her own production company (Power Generation Entertainment Co. Ltd.). She is also in charge of scriptwriting. She has produced and written 7 idol dramas since 2001, 5 of which meet my definition of inter-Asian idol dramas. | Mar 26, 2013 |
| 5. | P2(M) | Tsai Yueh-Hsun, leader of his own production company (Prajna Works Entertainment Co. Ltd.) and is also in charge of directing. He has produced and directed several idol dramas and films since 2003, 5 of which are inter-Asian. | Feb 20, 2013 |
| 6. | P3(F) | Production company leader. She has produced an idol drama that was co-operated by companies from Taiwan and the PRC and employed a South Korean actor who co-starred with Taiwanese actors. Her career in the late 1990s and 2000s based in both Taiwanese and PRC TV industries. | Feb 13, 2013 |
| 7. | EP1(M) | Executive producer of P1. | Jul 24, 2013 |
| 8. | EP2(F) | Executive producer of Angie Chai's Comic Ritz Production Co. Ltd. The company has produced more than 10 inter-Asian idol dramas since 2001. | Feb 23, 2013 |
| 9. | S1(F) | Freelance writer. She has worked in idol drama business since early 2000s, especially for Angie Chai/Comic Ritz and GTV. She was a professional theatre writer/director. | Feb 4, 2013 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Since the late 2000s, she has been doing theatre and idol dramas as producer, director and writer all at the same time. | |
| 10. | S2(M) | Freelance writer. He has worked in idol drama business since early 2000s. Before that he was a professional theatre writer/director. Since the late 2000s, he has been doing theatre and idol dramas at the same time. | Feb 4, 2013 |
| 11. | S3(F) | Freelance writer. She has worked in idol drama since mid-2000s. Before writing for idol dramas, she was a professional theatre writer/director and also wrote for non-commercial TV dramas. She has been doing theatre and idol dramas at the same time. | Jan 25, 2013 |
| 12. | S4(F) | Freelance writer. She worked as an entertainment journalist and variety-show executive in the 1990s. She became an idol drama writer in early 2000s. | Feb 6, 2013 |
| 13. | S5(F) | Freelance writer. She worked for variety-show scripting around 2000s and has written idol dramas since early 2000s. | Feb 12, 2013 |
| 14. | S6 (F) | Freelance writer. She has worked in TV drama since early 1990s. She has written many commercial TV dramas and idol dramas, one of which was a Taiwanese-Chinese-Korean production. | Jan 23, 2013 |
| 15. | S7 (M) | Freelance film/TV director. He has worked with Jerry Feng's idol dramas since mid-2000s. | Mar 15, 2013 |

Meanwhile, I collected drama-related materials published in Taiwan, including production companies' and TV workers' promotional materials and interviews on TV and press, as well as drama DVDs, posters, commercials, press releases, behind-the-scenes video clips/books, etc. Through looking at these materials I was able to develop some ideas about their works, albeit the ideas awaited confirmation – or challenge. The secondary data, such as TV talk shows and newspaper and magazine interviews, were also used to assist in in-depth interviews in case I encountered problems interviewing significant informants. These TV talk shows are now put onto online video websites free of charge. Newspapers and magazines are stored in the National Central Library and Taipei Municipal Libraries in Taipei, Taiwan. I used online databases to search for relevant news coverage. The major newspapers in Taiwan include *Apple Daily*, *United Daily*, *China Times*, and *Liberty Times*, etc. The major magazines include *Common Wealth*, *30*

*Magazine*, *Wealth*, *Taiwan Panorama* (formerly known as *Sinorama*), *Global Views Monthly*, *Business Weekly*, *Eslite Reader*, etc. A quarterly magazine *Dramaturgist Quarterly*, which lived for a short period during 2006 and 2007, was an important reference. They were helpful for my analysis of the activities of TV producers whom I did not manage to interview, such as Angie Chai and Jerry Feng. These Taiwanese sources covered the idol dramas either as an important domestic cultural industry or as information related to public figures, stars and celebrities. Professional industrial magazines functioning as critics of Taiwanese TV have been scant. However, a few online news websites such as *Punchline* and *Tech Orange* have emerged in recent years and offered Taiwanese TV drama reviews, in-depth reports and columns on Taiwanese TV industry. [22] These materials have been very helpful for my research.

I collected industry data by interviewing industry workers and reviewing Taiwanese government-funded industry reports, press coverage, and academic researches on Taiwanese TV's political economy. It is important to note here that although I was given some industry data from top managers of the Taiwanese TV companies, it remains difficult to have a clear view of idol drama's overseas market because of the lack of coherent trade statistics. Also, according to my informants, the numbers have been exaggerated in order to serve as marketing and promotion tools for the companies (EP2, personal communication, Feb 23, 2013, pp.29-30; P1, personal communication, March 26, 2013, p.22). For instance, it has been common to read in newspapers about Taiwanese TV producers celebrating the number of countries they have entered and how high their fees have been for their drama shows. The fee a TV drama actually receives and its production budget have been top secrets for Taiwanese TV business whose stock is not publicly traded and whose financial reports are not released. Market expansion is a dimension by which to judge a market-oriented company's status and success. The more countries the company has entered, especially benchmarking markets such as Japan and the PRC, the more success and career capital it seems to acquire. In this way, the revenue and overseas market expansion of the company functions more like a promoting tool for it to increase its commercial values. Temporarily, it would attract curiosity and interests from outsiders. After all, the business is full of workers relying on the glamour of an impressive track record to increase the future economic prospect of their careers.

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[22] Available at: http://punchline.asia/ and http://buzzorange.com/techorange/

In summary, although it might be difficult to have a clear picture of the idol drama industry, it is possible to trace its inter-Asian packaging by interviewing TV drama professionals and examining published materials. Their strategies, directions and foreign linkages are what I am interested in. Hence the above-mentioned materials remain useful references.

### 3.1.3 Interviews, Presumptions and Modifications

The questions of my interviews with these informants were about their previous work experience centred on my case study dramas, including the emergence of the dramas, production initiatives, funding structure, the role of foreign funding organisations, their negotiations and obstacles during the productions, individual work experience, perceptions and attitudes towards inter-Asian idol dramas, and so on. The questions were tailored for the informants. The executive producers and producers received questions about their companies' strategies and inter-Asian co-operating partners, as well as questions related to the specific TV dramas they worked on. The interview questions I prepared for the freelance directors and scriptwriters were mainly about details in the production of the TV dramas in which they participated. The managers of TV broadcasters received questions related to drama programming strategies and orientations, e.g. why were they adopting inter-Asian packaging? I noticed that GTV had more co-operations with Japanese companies than others, although it also had many drama co-productions with PRC companies. As I had to be efficient in the interviews, my questions with GTV top managers focused particularly on GTV's Japanese connection since it could enhance my understanding about Japanese co-operations.

I did not ask my informants any questions on the deregulation of the Taiwanese TV market in the 1990s and the influence of Hollywood and other foreign TV imports. I believed that it was my responsibility to study the political economy of Taiwanese TV drama making. My previous interview experiences taught me that drama professionals are not academic researchers. What they do best is talk with ease about their work and creative experiences. Besides, as said above, my interviews were in general quite short and included the time spent in my informants signing research consent forms. It was imperative I spent every second of the interviews on their working experiences and their own understanding of the industry.

#### 3.1.3.1 Interacting with the Informants in Interviews

My informants included workers from top and lower levels in the hierarchy of Taiwanese idol drama making. Their hierarchical positions seemingly did not much affect their engagements in my research, but could have constrained the amount of time they had for participation and also the disclosure of their work. The informants higher up in the hierarchy had been interviewed time and again. They often had their own fluent, formal and careful discourses. With them I had to induce them to reveal more details; this took a lot of time, but had the advantage of preventing them from taking control of my interviews.

I interviewed Virginia Liu on 26 March 2013 in the meeting room of her company's office. In the interview, she did not consider me a stranger and even bought noodles and ate her dinner with me. As I had closely observed her and knew her *waishengren* background, I understood her creative strategy well. I successfully collected what I needed and my interview questions were carefully answered by her. Regarding my interview of Liu's staff members, at that time only EP1 was still working for Liu. I interviewed EP1 on 24 July 2013 to gain an understanding of his perception of Liu's production strategy. I had now acquired a feeling of confidence in being much more in control in the interviews and was able to induce Liu and EP1 to tell me important details.

I had never met Tsai Yueh-Hsun before the public forum of the 2012 National Taiwan University Film Festival, and thus I was a total stranger to him. Luckily, Tsai kindly agreed to an interview for two hours. I strongly felt the lack of time in my interview with Tsai because I had many questions to ask and many points to clarify with him. This was because he seemed ambivalent and kept adapting to his production conditions but also because I had only known him and held some subjective ideas about him based on his images in the press. I will discuss this further later.

The top-level workers tended to be diplomatic in my interviews compared with the staff members who, lower in the hierarchy in the idol drama industry, were more likely to express criticism. Interviewing the latter was particularly crucial as I wanted to understand how the storytellers at the lower level were influenced by the top-level workers. My scriptwriter informants could participate in my interviews relatively easily. They seemed to act more frankly and were happier to reveal more about themselves. My research missed the heyday of the industry that occurred during the first decade of the 2000s. The industry was now in a crisis, losing profits and reducing production fees. Many of the idol drama writers were worrying about their future careers

when I carried out my interviews. Although many of them were likely to be aware of the crisis, only a few spoke up and explicitly expressed their anxieties to me. S1 told me frankly that my research did not meet her needs. She commented that it would have no effect on the industry and suggested I research how the Taiwanese government could help the industry (personal communication, Feb 4, 2013, p.19). Her concern was about how the industry could be rescued. Yet I remained keen to delineate the cultural politics of idol dramas after the neo-liberal deregulation of Taiwanese TV. I was very aware of the crisis but my theoretical interest was on how different creative strategies of Taiwanese idol drama producers obtain legitimacy. The research, I felt, could still be meaningful for the industry, but it would be unable to quickly and directly show resolutions to the crisis.

#### 3.1.3.2 The First Presumption and Modification

A number of my major presumptions were soon challenged early on. Just like Koichi Iwabuchi who optimistically expected that Japanese commercial media industry could have contributed to inter-Asian cultural dialogues in various ways (Iwabuchi, 2009, p.30), I held a similar expectation toward idol drama. To briefly explain, in the course of my research, my own problem was that I tried to tackle the incredible ambiguity of commercial idol drama workers whilst I over expected their critical agency to make changes to society. For example, I thought that my producer and scriptwriter informants consciously made a number of cross-cultural scenes in my case study dramas ideologically meaningful. The thinking was denied by a number of my informants who claimed that they were unaware of the deep meanings that their dramas could generate.

My first presumption mainly related to the classical dichotomy between the inclination and resistance to commercialism, more specifically, between the urge to produce what bigger markets expected and the refusal to produce. I thought that the division would also present in idol drama productions. I hoped to find any critical agency that could have injected progressive ideas into the idol drama industry. In my interviews, I often projected such an ideal figure to the scriptwriters as they seemingly bore less direct financial pressure than their producers, and also as I had met a number of scriptwriters who struggled under commercial pressure. Moreover, I presumed that the division were inter-Asian, such as PRC censorship affects Taiwanese scriptwriters. I wanted to prove if the scriptwriters would be less commercial and less motivated to target the bigger PRC market while the producers would be more willing to appeal to the market. I wanted to find if the

division between the two roles would correspond to the division between Taiwanese and non-Taiwanese market prioritisation.

It turned out to be wrong to presume that producers would "always" care more about market success than scriptwriters and thus there would "always" be tension, resistance and negotiation between the writers and producers. In my interviews, these writers talked about which idol drama producers they chose to work for, the reasons they worked for the TV dramas I was analysing, strategies adopted by the producers, how the strategies determined their scripts, and how they wrote to serve the producers. When I asked the writers if there were any such tensions, to my surprise, not all of the writers thought that they encountered "tensions" very much. Instead, they pointed out the significance of choosing producers and production companies they get along well:

> Producer and scriptwriter need to get along well. They should be able to tolerate each other and complete a drama together. (S6, personal communication, Jan 23, 2013, p.3)

> I collaborate with familiar production companies…We know each other in terms of our insistences. They respect their scriptwriters. (S2, personal communication, Feb 4, 2013, p.23)

To briefly explain, I underestimated the difference between members of this industry, in terms of their commercial and non-commercial inclinations. My initial interview questions made a common mistake, as discussed by John Caughie (1981, p.11), Horace Newcomb and Robert S. Alley (1982, p.100) and Paul Watson (2007, pp.96-98); this was to naively presume that scriptwriters were "self-conscious auteurs" who would do everything in their power, resist against barriers such as commercialism or dominating power, in order to put deep meaning into their dramas. I also overlooked the plurality of idol drama producers. As S1 told me "all TV dramas have different purposes set by their producers" (personal communication, Feb 4, 2013, p.17), in fact, the producers would sometimes produce highly market-oriented TV dramas and other times make dramas that do not enjoy high ratings. They might also surrender to commercialism as time goes by, gradually prioritising the significance of profit and changing their principles (S1, personal communication, Feb 4, 2013, pp.25-26). Nonetheless, it is wrong to argue that producers are always more market-oriented than scriptwriters in the industry.

Eric Ma's (1999) account draws on both Pierre Bourdieu's (1993) study of cultural production and Newcomb and Alley's (1983) case studies in the American TV industry, and showed me a means in which to explain my findings. Examining the production culture in the Hong Kong TV industry which consisted of one big commercial TV station and one small public TV station, Ma argues that the commercial and public TV stations have their own schemata and cultures which

determine the creative expressions in their productions. People who do not accept specific schemata regarding their work environment are unlikely to feel autonomy and would identify the difference between them and the schemata as “tension”. People who are used to the schemata of their workplace would feel autonomous more readily. Cultural theorists have indicated, explicitly or implicitly, the existence of multiple positions in cultural spaces which differ from each other in terms of their critical distance from ideological reproduction (Foucault, 1969; Williams, 1977; Benjamin, 1978; Bourdieu, 1993). Their understanding perfectly fits with my analysis of my informants’ relationships with other people in their field. The real workplace of idol drama making has multiple situations. Numerous producers stand on a continuum poled by commercial and non-commercial considerations and they open their companies to realise their own vision. Anyone, including writers, may also become producers and own their production companies. The producers’ vision, ideas and strategies would determine the creative schemata of their production companies that should be followed by their employees (both permanent staff and those employed on a case-by-case basis). They also would decide which funding bodies they raise funds from and which creative workers to share similar purposes and seek to collaborate with. They could have different purposes between projects, taking commercially safer decision sometimes and riskier ones the other times, which my initial questions did not account for. They could orient their productions more or less close to what they perceive markets like. They also decide if the productions target Taiwanese market or another market.

Therefore, in my later interviews, I requested my informants to comment on the degree of commercial orientation of their producers. In general, among these inter-Asian packagers I analysed, only Virginia Liu is less mainstream in terms of the gender-class values and distance with both KMT and DPP’s nationalism in her works. In the end, I identified Angie Chai, Jerry Feng and Tsai Yueh-Hsun as being more willing to appeal to what mainstream audiences prefer than Liu, even though they are all packaging East Asian elements for their productions. The three more mainstream TV producers, nonetheless, have different target audiences, specialities, visions of their careers and production strategies, which will be detailed in chapter 5.

Scriptwriters also have their own vision, ideas, speciality, etc. and could also be more or less open to commercial requests from funding bodies higher up in the industrial hierarchy although they ought to find the producers who share most ideas with them. Some of the scriptwriters accept commercial considerations from funders willingly. On the other hand, a handful care much about

their works' reputation and the themes they inject in their TV dramas. The latter would reject producers who are too market-oriented. The writers of the second type could also separate jobs into different categories. Some jobs are mainly for sustenance while others may be for the realisation of personal vision. That means that I needed to differentiate the scriptwriters on a continuum. By paying attention to the initiation of the TV dramas of my scriptwriter informants, any changes to their initial plans, how they worked for the TV dramas and how they felt about the changes, I could identify where they belong on the continuum.

It is worthy to spend a few paragraphs to describe these scriptwriters in terms of their positions on the continuum so as to have a clear picture of their comments on my case study TV drama producers in chapter 5. To understand how the continuum looks like, the difference between a theatre director-writer S3, who has now made a living by writing for idol drama, and the other writers is very useful. Among the writers I interviewed, only S3 clearly expressed that she does not want to be bound by considerations of what markets like. She creates stories according to her ideas about societies. She cares very much about the social historical connotations in her works:

> I do not have much an awareness of what market prefers in the sense that, I usually write a story according to how it should be. For instance, I wrote about a Japanese woman coming to Taiwan to find her mother not because I was targeting Japanese market but because…Taiwan was colonised by Japan. The Japanese woman coming to Taiwan to find her mother would have a cultural implication. For the audience, this might not be very meaningful, but it was for me. I cared this...As a professional TV drama scriptwriter, I naturally consider the marketability of stories in my mind. But I cannot write a story with it because the marketability of the story in my assessment would never be accurate…No matter how much I assess and understand market demands, to me, eventually I could write the story well only when it embodies me emotionally. (S3, personal communication, Jan 25, 2013, p.4)

In my observation, S3 is progressive in diverse aspects, including Taiwanese ethno-national politics, gender and class issues. She is opinionated. S3 cares so much about the realisation of her ideas that she has chosen to write for a few TV producers that want to produce TV dramas that are grand in terms of subject-matter, rejecting work offers from producers who would ask her in detail to serve specific requests, such as casting and location (S3, personal communication, Jan 25, 2013, pp.5-6). By doing so, she minimises the circumstances that she would encounter tensions with and suppressions from the producers. S3's rejection manifests her resistance.

In contrast, the other five scriptwriters that I interviewed never expressed similarly strong insistence. They either showed little resistance or complaints to interferences from their top managers after negotiation, or worked well with the managers. The reasons they gave me were different, some of which were quite complicated. S1 and S2 probably stand between S3 and the

other scriptwriters. Also coming from theatre, S1 and S2 nonetheless have held more receptive attitude to and been more willing to work for more market-oriented producers. This is seemingly because they have distinguished their works into categories with different goals (S2, personal communication, Feb 4, 2013, p.28). When they write stories mainly to serve producers, they metaphorise their roles as “cooks” who are responsible of making good dishes with the materials given by the producers (S1 and S2, personal communication, Feb 4, 2013, p.21). They are agents of the producers, constructing stories that realistically resemble the contemporary realities of Taiwanese society in their perception with very few personal expressions (S1 and S2, personal communication, Feb 4, 2013, pp.10-17). For instance, S1 and S2 pointed out that I wrongly presumed they intentionally made a drama an allegory of cross-Strait relationship (personal communication, Feb 4, 2013, pp.12-13). They stressed that, in that drama, they were just accommodating their producer’s requests, such as casting and shooting location, with their story. In this case, S1 and S2 only responded with pity instead of anger when experiencing what can be considered “interfering decisions” that asked to change their initial plotting.

Scriptwriters S4, S5, S6 had held more receptive attitude to mainstream market preference and been more willing to work for more market-oriented producers than S3. Similarly, the dramas that were penned by them embodied and realised the ideas of their producers (S6, personal communication, Jan 23, 2013; S4, personal communication, Feb 6, 2013; S5, personal communication, Feb 12, 2013, p.5).

The point that I am making here is that these inter-Asian drama writers did not always have serious binary friction or contestation with their producers or funders, but a number of them indeed had negotiations and compromises. When the scriptwriter who is more loyal to personal vision comes to collaborate with a more market-oriented producer, there could be difference between them. Indeed, such difference took place in some of my case study dramas penned by S1, S2 and S3 who were forced to compromise. The divide between commercialism and non-commercial interest, which I thought to exist within the production process, were primarily found between different TV dramas. The divide in the orientations towards Taiwanese market and towards mainland Chinese market also can be found between the dramas. Thus, I changed my focus of analysis to different inter-Asian packaging strategies of producers with a minor attention on creative negotiation, suppression and compromise of their scriptwriters (how the scriptwriters view

their producers and work for the latter). The information provided by my informants is used in the fifth chapter.

#### 3.1.3.3 Other Presumptions and Modifications

Among all my interview informants, Tsai Yueh-Hsun was the most well-renowned figure whom I had known via the press. I prepared as much as I could for this interview. I collected many newspaper articles about him, even his Japanese press interview. I interviewed S3, which served as a preparation for my interview with Tsai. These preparations brought both a good and bad influence to my interview with him. On the one hand, I seemed quite familiar with Tsai's work history, aspiration, vision and strategy. For example, I learned from S3 about Tsai's interest in Hollywood action films (personal communication, Jan 25, 2013, p.10). On the other, I had made a naïve presumption about Tsai being "patriotic to Taiwan" as he had always claimed Taiwan was his priority and he had resisted moving his base to the PRC. In addition to my projection of a critical agency to him and my idea of him consciously placing deep ideological meanings to the cross-cultural scenes in my case study dramas, these ideas together made it difficult for me to analyse Tsai Yueh-Hsun's strategies.

My interview questions for him were divided into two themes. The first was about his regional operations, network, resources and markets. I was particularly interested in his East Asian production strategy and how he developed it. Tsai announced his new project, which is called in Chinese "*Ya Zhou* (*Asia*) *Hua Yu* (*Chinese-language*) *Xin* (*new*) *Ji Hua* (*project*)" in September 2012 (Wang, 2012; C.-W. Wu, 2012). It is composed of four TV dramas and films, which I will discuss later in chapter 5. The title of the project literally says "a new Asian, Chinese-language project" in a word-by-word translation. It sounds ambiguous and confusing by itself because of its juxtaposition of two different geo-cultural categories, as in a project named, for example, "new European, English-language project". What does it mean? Does it refer to cultural identities or just scopes of drama market? Does he mean "a new East Asian and Chinese-language project", or "a new East Asian project of his Chinese-language films and TV dramas"? What is his national and cultural identification? The press reports did not provide a deep analysis of Tsai's new project from the angles from which I wanted to know. I was eager to seek a more detailed explanation from Tsai.

Tsai's own office was decorated with his Golden Bell Award trophies, but I noticed a poster of Christopher Nolan's *Batman* movie standing on the floor of a corner near my seat. He was seemingly very interested in the *Batman* movie. Our interview started from Tsai's regional partners and vision of markets; the idea behind *Ya Zhou Hua Yu Xin Ji Hua*, which he already talked about numerous times in his press interviews; and then I asked about his East Asian partners, an aspect which had been relatively overlooked by the press. I particularly asked him about his interactions with managers from the PRC and Japanese companies that funded and marketed his works, especially Beijing Hualubaina (PRC) and Amuse Soft (Japan). Tsai called the managers "his partners and friends". He said that "East Asian markets" include markets in the PRC, Japan, South East Asia, etc., wherever *Meteor Garden* (2001) was shown (P2, personal communication, Feb 20, 2013, pp.1-5).

In Tsai's promotion material for *White Tower* (2006) he stressed the significance of East Asian markets and emphasised the importance of airing it in Japan (Yangming Entertainment, 2006, p.105), so that before our interview I presumed that Tsai did not want to interact with the PRC and wanted to expand into the Japanese market. In the interview, however, he explained that the importance of the Japanese market was relative. He emphasised the significance of the market as it was a benchmark at that time. However, as the PRC market had been rising more quickly, this market was now turning out to be very important for him, although he was not prepared to give up his Japanese marketing network. He would not give up his success in the Japanese market and would still co-operate with Japanese media companies. I then probed into the concept of *Ya Zhou Hua Yu Xin Ji Hua*, telling him how I felt the wording confusing and vague. By dint of my questioning, Tsai replied that he wants to unite Chinese-speaking media companies so as to enter non-Chinese speaking markets. The term *Ya Zhou Hua Yu Xin Ji Hua* means to him "a new East Asian project of Chinese-language films and TV dramas" (P2, personal communication, Feb 20, 2013, pp.3-5). I found out that he has associated himself with a pan-Chinese culture in order to appeal to the Chinese-speaking population outside of Taiwan for his new project which has generic Chinese-speaking settings and targets East Asian markets.

The second part of my interview concerned the production of *Black and White* (2009) and its prequel movie, their presentation of East Asians, and the influence of PRC censorship on the prequel movie, in particular the (dis)appearance of North Korean characters. During the production of the prequel movie, the Taiwanese press, which had tended to rummage around in

popular texts looking for material to ignite binary debates and attract public attention, enquired whether Tsai had been compromised because of PRC censorship, by removing elements of North Korea, which has official diplomatic relation with the PRC, when he could not obtain production and screening licences from the PRC government (Chu, 2010c; Chiang, 2011; Y.-L. Wang, 2011b). I also wondered similarly: why he decided that North Korean characters should not appear in the movie? Was the removal caused by the request from the PRC funders? Did he have contestation against PRC censorship? The news mentioned above was very short and incomplete. Tsai's answer to the questions was important for me, in order to understand his attitude towards the representation of geo-politics in relation to the mainstream world views of Taiwan and PRC.

When I raised the issue about the representation of East Asia in *Black and White* and the removal of any North Korean representation, I unwisely repeated the discourse of the Taiwanese press on the issue. Tsai, who was mostly very polite, communicative and fluent, did not seem to be happy at the enquiry. He remained calm and asked in return why he should bother to keep the elements which contradicted the mainstream world view of the PRC officialdom? Taking Taiwan's Buddhism Da-Ai TV station as an example, for which he worked a decade ago, as well as the censorship in Muslim countries and Taiwanese censorship in the Cold-War era, he explained that any funding bodies have their own ideologies and administer certain censorships, and he tends to accept most of the suggestions from his partnering distributors from the markets in East Asia.

> Taiwanese society used to have a lot of restrictions. Many movies did not pass the censorship and was not screened and discussed (in Taiwan). In South East Asian countries, there have been many constraints…Muslim countries have been like this. Da-Ai TV station does not feature meat dishes in it. I think that this is just the requests of every creation platform and every market. Now everyone wants to pick at Chinese censorship and the hardship of passing it…That is why I said that I want to unify. I do not want opposition. Taiwan also has a lot of restrictions…It is not more tolerant than the other side (PRC). They did not want to have terrorist and North Korean elements in the movie…for their own conditions…The censorship in Taiwan used to be like that of present-day China. It was as equally strict as today's Chinese censorship…When I started making drama for Da-Ai, I understood why I should not struggle to change it. It is a TV station of Buddhists and it is vegan. If I want to enter the PRC market, I must understand what the market wants. Why do I struggle to oppose it? ...Creation is not to produce opposition. I don't think it right. (P2, personal communication, Feb 20, 2013, p.24)

> They (content distributors) are directly connected to the audiences. I can learn their experiences and understand what are possible. I can see their principles from their responses to my projects. I suggest that we do not take it (the suggestion of the distributors) as a constraint and criticism. Take it as a support and comment in my productions. (P2, personal communication, Feb 20, 2013, pp.17-18)

My presumption contradicted Tsai's answers and I had a strong sense of discord and was swamped with a feeling that Tsai had not revealed the detail of his strategy to me. I thought this was maybe because he did not know me at all, or maybe I simply did not have enough time to probe into the relationship of Tsai's ethnic background, political viewpoint and production strategy.

Following our interview, within my analysis, I understood Tsai's true meaning, even though the interview had certainly not touched on his personal background nor his political stance. My main problem was that I held a high expectation to his critical agency when I was still figuring out his ambiguity in relation to national politics. I was hoping that Tsai would have inclined towards changing society through his film and TV productions and that his East Asian packaging would resist dominant discourses as Taiwanese art cinema had done. In fact, his TV dramas are post-Confucian and Westernised in terms of gender and cultural values but are indifferent to geo-politics, including Taiwanese national politics. In terms of geo-politics, the North Korean element appeared in the *Black and White* as a stereotype in Taiwanese world view since Tsai was not careful and experienced enough in creating "completely apolitical" storyline at that time. For commercial purpose, Tsai needed to become more neutral and less attached to Taiwanese pro-American world view when his market plan expanded internationally. Thus he was willing to remove it once he adapted to new production condition in the prequel. He has not intended to represent the heterogeneous East Asia and he is adopting the idea of integration of Chinese-speaking media industries. The relationship between Tsai's works, his commitment to Taiwan-based film-making and his assuming of Chinese cultural identity may well deserve theoretical attention. For the time being, it might be more accurate to see Tsai as a "neo-liberal media entrepreneur" who originates from Taiwan and flexibly adapts to the laissez-faire market condition. His East Asian market discourse that follows market logic is different from intellectual discourse of inter-Asian connections called for by Koichi Iwabuchi (2009; 2010a; b) and Kuan-Hsing Chen (1998; 2010) and from that found in Taiwan New Cinema (Shih, 2007). With the findings, I analysed Tsai Yueh-Hsun by calling him a producer of generic global culture in chapter 5. When I had a clear picture of Tsai's creation, I no longer held naïve optimism about critical agency of idol drama workers, and now found it easier to understand the positions of many idol drama producers in their field, including the other three inter-Asian packagers Virginia Liu, Jerry Feng, and Angie Chai.

### 3.1.4 Transcriptions and Anonymity

All of my interviews were conducted in Chinese Mandarin and transcribed by me into written Chinese. The transcriptions were paginated. When citing the interviews, I include the page numbers they appear on if necessary. Only quotes appearing in the final thesis were translated

to English. My main ethical concern was how to protect my informants who have their power relations in the small world of production groups. As my interviews covered both levels, how to protect those in the lower hierarchy was my main problem. These people have also been subject to larger regional power relations because of their TV dramas' overseas marketing and fundings. Their critical opinions involved other national media companies and could arouse inter-Asian disputes if the opinions became public.

As East Asia overall does not enjoy completely guaranteed freedom of speech, my informants were very careful about their public statements concerning politically sensitive issues, and were aware of the existence of various formal censorships, especially those who had been exposed to media and public attention. Yet those who had not been in the spotlight or interviewed talked about their criticisms more straightforwardly, which was exactly why I interviewed them. Vitally, all of my informants principally agreed with my use of the interviews and revelation of their names and organisations when they signed their consent forms. Still, providing them protection was important.

The experienced informants higher up in the hierarchy were more reserved and would be tempted to put a polish on their careers; other informants lower in the hierarchy talked about conflicts in very great detail. Yet the latter were also careful and wanted me to use only some parts of their information, especially when they revealed negative aspects of their workplace. In general, the lower the hierarchy, the more hesitant the informants were about disclosing identities and about full revelation of interview content. I observed the ethical principles that a public statement about a drama and its company can obviously be revealed, whilst what is not made public should remain hidden. For instance, one of the informants wanted to remain anonymous when he or she commented about a producer. Another asked me not to reveal some parts in our interview that involved negative matters within a company. Yet my dilemma was that I had to mention the TV dramas and companies of the informants as they are at the centre of my thesis. I decided to reveal parts of the informants' identities and make sure I analyse their conflicts in very nuanced or unbiased ways. So I only anonymise their names. To avoid any risk, I offered the informants an opportunity to review a draft of the thesis, and a number of them viewed where they are cited in the thesis.

Two producers who own their companies are named as I have their agreements to keep their names public. This is because, firstly, their names are their brands and come foremost, even

before their companies' name. Secondly, they are higher up in the hierarchy and as spokespersons they accept media interviews very often – which I also use alongside my own interviews – and thus are experienced and careful interviewees. In other words, anonymity is quite impossible in their cases.

I did not interview those TV workers who opposed and refused inter-Asian idol dramas, e.g. art-house and documentary film-makers in Taiwan who have gradually worked more closely with the public TV sector.[23] This limitation was identified when I analysed my interviews and found out that refusal was a form of contestation for the TV workers who were invited to participate in the dramas, but declined the opportunity. It was difficult for me to contact these individuals. Fortunately, some of my informants became sceptical over time about particular forms of inter-Asian packaging and shared with me their participation criteria and perceptions about the works. Their perceptions and comments greatly cover the gaps in the scope of informants.

## 3.2 Ideological Analysis of Narrative Inter-Asian Idol Drama

As I analysed my interviews I realised that inter-Asian packaging can take place at both production level and story level. There are inter-Asian operations at the production level that are aiming to be generic, and others at the narrative level that are aiming to be cross-cultural. Some producers had avoided mentioning controversial cross-cultural representations, and some had created simple urban love stories in historically non-identifiable urban spaces. Only a handful of producers, such as Virginia Liu and Angie Chai, etc., produced cross-cultural dramas that manifest the multicultural reality of contemporary Taiwanese and East Asian urban cities. Accordingly, I reorganised my chapters, analysing these operations together in chapters 4 and 5 and the cross-cultural dramas in chapter 6.

The analysis of idol drama's cross-cultural articulations of Taiwan's interactions with three different East Asian countries is guided by Stuart Hall's notion of "(mediated) articulation" (1982; 1986a; 1989). My usage of the concept is modified to refer to the articulation of the "little subjectivity" of Taiwan with more powerful countries in East Asia in terms of their value systems, and looks at the situation whereby hegemonic discourses are scattered throughout many

[23] For instance, film-maker Li Chih-Chiang prefers TV drama projects for Public Television Service and Hakka TV (two TV stations in Taiwan's public TV sector) to idol drama work offers (Hakka TV, 2014).

countries of East Asia, contesting each other in aspects of gender, class and national issues. In this light, inter-Asian idol dramas articulate, in their storytelling, the world views and values of their Taiwanese packagers and the co-operating allies which the packagers depend upon in terms of market demands and the provision of funding. Structuralist semiotic analysis is adopted to examine the ideological discourses of the dramas.

### 3.2.1 Ideological Analysis to Fictional TV Drama Narratives

Structuralism is concerned to investigate and reveal naturalised discursive cultural constructs in cultural and media products (Fiske, 1987, p.31). Following Ferdinand de Saussure, Roland Barthes (1973; 1977) builds on this structuralism for his semiotic cultural criticism on contemporary French mass media. Drawing on linguistics, Barthes argues that a cultural and media artefact is composed of numerous sets of ideologically meaningful signs formed, in its meaning structure, of a "signifier" and "signified". The signified has literal denotation and connotation, which is ideologically rooted in a temporal-spatial value system. The connotative level of the meaning of a cultural artefact conveys either the deep ideological desires or the viewpoints of a specific social group, for example the patriarchal capitalist class that dominated the collective value system of capitalist society in France during the 1960s and 1970s (Barthes, 1973). This process of selecting and combining signs into a meaningful textual artefact or statement is called signification. The signification operates along paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes; selecting different signs paradigmatically and syntagmatically produces very different meanings (Fiske, 1987, p.127).

Structuralist linguistic and semiotic science has proved very influential in literary, cinema and TV criticism, providing vocabulary for a close analysis of narrative sequences (Fiske, 1987, p.142), but it has a disadvantage: analysts tend to neaten up their objects while overlooking the gap between the signifier and the signified (Seiter, 1992, p.63). The theory of structuralism also changed and moved to a post-structuralist position. Take Barthes's transition between his early and late works as an example. His early works consider the importance of formal structure in the construction of meaning, implying a unity between parts of a structure. He later provides a subtler account in which he reveals "a process by which meaning is structured into narrative" by the writer and reader who engage on equal terms (Barthes, 1974; Fiske, 1987, pp.142-44). Meaning now is no longer determined by the formal structure of a text but structured in the process of

interpretation of the text, especially the interpretation of audience. In spite of this, structuralism can still be a useful method whereby analysts can spend some time probing systematically into their textual research objects before venturing out into other models of study, such as audience studies (Seiter, 1992, p.63).

Semiotic structuralist ideological criticism has been applied to small concerns such as sentences, magazine pages, advertisement photos, film stills and, by extension, to a complex artefact such as comics, film, TV news, advertisement and TV drama in different spatial-temporal contexts, in the US, UK and Continental Europe (Metz, 1974a; b; Eco, 1976; Fiske, 1987; Allen, 1992; O'Donnell, 1999). Structuralism views TV drama as a cultural artefact, a story and a form of narrative – a seemingly natural arrangement of characters and events in temporal and spatial settings, these elements being logically connected over time, usually with causal relations (Bordwell and Thompson, 1986, p.83, Alverado, Gutch and Wollen, 1987, p.122; Stam, Burgoyne and Flitterman-Levis, 1992, p.69; Taylor and Willis, 1999, pp.67-68). TV drama is a naturalised narrative that is an ideological construct composed of numerous signs, which is what the semiotic ideological criticism aims to uncover (Fiske, 1987, p.130; Seiter, 1992, p.32).

Similar to film, TV drama is composed of audio-visual signifying codes. A TV drama begins production with a synopsis, a work set out on paper before its subsequent audio-visualisation. Ultimately, audiences receive it through its verbal and non-verbal aspects that appeal to various senses. Its verbal expression includes mainly dialogues between characters; its non-verbal expression includes music, visual presentation and cinematography, etc. John Fiske understands TV as an audio-visual medium similar to film, arguing that its verbal codes (dialogues) and non-verbal codes (music, cinematography and so on) should be analysed in researches, which he himself does by providing criticism on these two aspects (1987, p.27).

Detailed analysis of a small, yet key segment, verbal or non-verbal, enables researchers to perform a detailed interpretation, but analysis of larger-scale TV drama narratives gives an overall picture (Fiske, 1987, p.6). As my aim was to discover the ideological discourses in inter-Asian idol dramas that their producers wished their audiences to receive, understanding the overall picture of the dramas – seeing how certain values and ideas are articulated in the dramas – mattered for me. Taking up the semiotic analysis of narrative that draws on Althusserian and Gramscian idea of ideology, French structuralism semiotics, and cultural studies' ideological criticism, I uncovered

the ideology of the dramas and answered questions such as how they reinforce or reproduce dominant value systems (Kozloff, 1992, p.68; Taylor and Willis, 1999, p.67).

Russian folk-tale analyst Vladimir Propp derived a structuralist syntagmatic analysis of character-centred narrative that has provided a reference point for analysts of film and TV drama synopsis (1968 cited in Fiske, 1987, p.134). Propp found out that Russian folk tales share common narrative structures formed by the protagonists' transformation, or journey, that is shaped by their relationships with other characters. All the characters function symbolically in the making of meanings in the tales. This method has been widely applied to film and TV researches which revolve around the development of protagonists, and the characters surrounding the protagonists (Fiske, 1987, p.136). Examined in this way, the whole story of a TV drama can be summarised in written form, particular plots being highlighted for specific research goals.

Propp is concerned to find the common structure shared by the folk tales, and the ideological functions that advance the folk tales. His findings help analysts of drama to look at the shared functions of characters that form similar story structures. According to Fiske (1987, p.143), as American TV drama tends to have simple, repetitious and straightforward narrative structures that are similar to the folk tales that have common structures and conventions connected to their social contexts, the narrative theory derived from Propp's work would be a good analytical tool for the TV drama in general (Fiske, 1987, p.148). But Fiske points out that such structuralist analysis would be applicable to the American TV series that have clear endings in every episode, but would not be applicable to the interminable American soap operas that run for years, anchor themselves along social pulses and thus are ideologically open and contradictory (Fiske, 1987, p.143).

Whilst Fiske's research objects are the American TV series where each episode usually has an independent and complete storyline (e.g. sit-coms and series) and the soap operas whose storylines are never-ending, Hugh O'Donnell is interested in non-US female-oriented TV dramas such as the telenovela that emerged from Spanish-speaking countries and spread to Europe. Telenovelas tend to have an ideological closure as they would usually end after a period of time, whereas continuous soap operas would rarely come to such closure (1999, pp.23-24). Thus any analytical accounts of the soap operas' ideology are interim (O'Donnell, 1999, p.212). O'Donnell (1999, p.3) suggests that the telenovelas fit well with the structuralist narrative analysis of Propp

because they are sequential, and their narratives move from the beginning through to the middle and to the end.

O'Donnell (1999, pp.21-23) divides the synopsis of telenovela into micro, macro and meta narratives. The micro-narrative refers to the "basic" or "literal" relationships of fictional characters, such as their familial and romantic relationships, friendships, rivalries, and antagonistic relationships. These relationships in the micro-narrative are the base of meta-narrative and macro-narrative. The meta-narrative, for O'Donnell, refers to the topic and subject-matter of a TV drama which is indirectly informed by the drama itself and should be identified by its audience in return. The meta-narrative may be topically connected to a specific social environment but it may also be universal, such as "love" being the meta-narrative of a heterosexual urban (middle class or teenage) romance. The macro-narrative is related, firstly, to which societal categories, e.g. gender, class, generation, ethnicity and nation, appear in the drama and which category the drama's protagonist belongs to. It also includes the social values of those specific categories conveyed in the drama, such as gender roles, relations and expectations, power and resistance, reform and convention, etc. In other words, the micro-narrative could be considered what Barthes calls the denotative level of a TV drama and the macro narrative fits Barthes's definition of the connotative level. The meta-narrative is closer to the denotative level in this sense because the TV drama's main subject-matter is usually clearly indicated, typically promoted by its sub-text, such as its synopsis. In ideological criticism, the macro-narrative is the key analytical level (O'Donnell, 1999, p.23). The ideological meaning of a telenovela appears in its macro-narrative where questions are raised, such as: does it show only upper class or only working class or does it combine more than two classes? What does it say about the viewpoint, world view and value system in its presentation of gender, national and class aspects, from specific ideological viewpoints and discourses?

I have explained how a TV drama synopsis can be analysed via a structuralist ideological analysis. Methods that focus on synopsis and characters, such as O'Donnell's structuralist account, fit well with my case study on idol drama because the idol drama too has fixed episodes, beginning, middle, and end, and consequently, ideological closure. Idol drama also entails the repetition of the popular formulae that interest Propp.

Instead of focusing on one particular drama, I have chosen seven dramas that were produced in different years and different contexts, as my whole thesis aims at gaining a

comprehensive picture of the inter-Asian articulations in idol dramas over the last few dynamic years. The dramas include *Silence*, *Fathers' War*, *Alice in Wonder City*, *Gangster's Bakery*, *You Light up My Star*, *Scent of Love* and *Fondant Garden*. They have non-Taiwanese characters and settings. Of importance is that each of them has a bilateral or trilateral inter-Asian linkage (one Taiwanese-PRC, two Taiwanese-South Korean, one Taiwanese-PRC-South Korean, and three Taiwanese-Japanese co-operations) in which foreign characters are featured, and Taiwanese interactions with non-Taiwanese East Asians are clearly manifested on screen. They were jointly contributed to by Taiwanese and non-Taiwanese individuals and companies. Their signifying processes were mainly carried out by Taiwanese packagers, who did not necessarily have funding from companies within the countries that were their target markets. Despite not having funding from the countries, their cross-cultural narratives necessarily articulated the ideologies of the countries since their aim was to attract local audiences and to export to the countries. Certainly, there are a great many TV dramas that have cross-cultural representations, in particular the category of Taiwanese-PRC co-productions, but the seven dramas I have chosen contain more ideological implications than other dramas and so may produce rewarding insights for researchers working on Taiwanese inter-Asian packaging.

Table 3-3 List of analysed dramas

| **Drama(year)** | **Acronym** | **Episodes** | **Taiwanese production company** | **Non-Taiwanese co-operator(s)** | **Shooting locations** | **Taiwanese terrestrial channel** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Silence* *深情密碼* (2006) | *Silence* | 20 | Comic Ritz Production Co. Ltd. | Yi-Yuan Production House (Hong Kong) | Taiwan, PRC | CTV |
| *Fathers' War* *老爸駕到,* ***aka*** *門當父不對* (2011) | *FW* | 17 | Chun Long International Entertainment Co. | Shenzhen Broadcasting System (the PRC) | Taiwan, PRC | CTV |
| *Alice in Wonder City* *給愛麗絲的奇蹟* (2012) | *AWC* | 15 | Eastern Shine Production Co.,GTV | Nil | Taiwan, Japan | CTS |
| *Gangster's Bakery* | *GB* | 15 | Comic International | Creative Artist Japan Talent Agency (Japan) | Taiwan | TTV |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *流氓蛋糕店* (2014) | | | Production Co. Ltd., GTV | | | |
| *You Light up My Star* *你照亮我星球* (2014) | *YLMS* | 20 | Oxygen Production Company, GTV | Taiwan branch of Amuse Soft (Japan) | Taiwan, Japan and Hong Kong | FTV |
| *Scent of Love* *戀香* (2003) | *SL* | 21 | Power Generation Entertainment Co. Ltd. | Media Banker Company (South Korea) | Taiwan, South Korea | TTV |
| *Fondant Garden* *翻糖花園* (2012) | *FG* | 16 | Comic Ritz Production Co. Ltd. | CNR Media and Roy Media Company (South Korea) | Taiwan, South Korea | CTV |

I personally viewed these TV dramas and transcribed them into written synopses that centred on the interactions and relationships of characters having different national, class and gender identities. I also noted a number of their scenes that clearly visualised the key ideological meanings in their macro-narratives. I watched *Scent of Love* and *Silence* when they were aired in 2003 and 2006 and watched them again during my research. I watched *Alice in Wonder City*, *Fondant Garden* when they were aired and *Fathers' War*, *Gangster's Bakery*, and *You Light up My Star* for the first time in the course of my analysis. I produced a written form of their synopses that will appear in chapter 6.

My ideological analysis took on board the cultural politics of nation, gender and class set against a globalised geo-political backdrop. These ethno-national, gender and class politics often intersect, and dramatic narratives concerning them tend to appear in not only nation-gender but also gender-class patterns, as I found out through my review of the studies of inter-Asian film narratives (Fore, 1993; Shih, 1995; 1998; Ma, 1999; Hitchcock, 2002; Yeh and Davis, 2002; Kim, 2004; K.-C. Lo, 2005, 2014; Teo, 2008; S. C. Wang, 2009; Chang, 2010; Yeh, 2010a; Wee, 2012; F.-c. I. Yang, 2012; 2013; Dasgupta, 2013). National relations are dramatised through relationships between characters, which also convey ideas about gender. The ideological views lie in the connotation level and the macro-narrative in these seven idol dramas. I modified O'Donnell's model with reference to the insights of the inter-Asian film researches aforementioned. I briefly discussed the protagonist relationships in the dramas and their topics

before I explored their specific macro-narratives: first, their allegories of national relations; and, second, the social, cultural and gender values conveyed in them.

My discussion has three main sections centring on the representations of Taiwan in relation to the PRC, Japan and South Korea in the seven dramas. To gain a comprehensive picture of Taiwanese inter-Asian articulations in them, I summarised their similarities and also highlighted their differences. I compared and contrasted the macro-narratives of the idol dramas that have the same co-operating foreign industries, so as to examine what narratives they share. For instance, I focused on the similarities and differences in the Taiwanese-PRC works in terms of three narratives over a period of time. I also did similar to the Taiwanese-Japanese and Taiwanese-South Korean TV dramas. In the conclusion, I provided an overall comparison of the three sections.

### 3.2.2 National Representations

When I analysed the inter-Asian TV dramas, it was important for me to examine if any dramatic tropes of cross-cultural relationships appearing in previous film and other media are reiterated in the dramas, and if so how they are conveyed contextually. From the aforementioned East Asian film analyses, I summarised three common geo-cultural political settings of East Asian film and TV drama: 1. an (ex-) imperial/colonial setting between a former imperial dominator and the dominated (S. C. Wang, 2009; Chang, 2010; Yeh, 2010a); 2. a post-Cold-War setting between a communist and a capitalist subject (Shih, 1995; 1998; Ma, 1999); 3. an inter-Asian setting between subjects that have more neutral, parallel historical bilateral relations (Yeh and Davis, 2002). In terms of narrative conventions, these contemporary or historical relations are either explicitly or implicitly drawn on and played out in the macro-narratives of the film and TV drama, with romance and competition as common dramatic tropes (metaphorical expressions) for the relations (Kim, 2004 cited in Lo, 2005, p.138). The inter-Asian geo-political issues and national political-economic relations are usually reduced to male-male or male-female protagonist relations in a dramatic world, as argued by Kwai-Cheung Lo (2005, p.138). Competing or hierarchical relationships between same-sex characters, usually male characters having different socio-economic and cultural status, tend to bear connotatively the national and political connections of their countries, or serve as allegories with regard to the countries' power and strength (Kim, 2004 cited in Lo, 2005, p.138). The characters as signs symbolise specific aspects

of the countries to which they are connected in the dramas via their connotation, and audiences treat them as allegorical national symbols. For example, post-Cold-War interactions between the PRC, Hong Kong and Taiwan were perceived as the physically and materially hierarchical relationships of characters from Hong Kong/Taiwan or the PRC when the former's economic power was stronger than the PRC (Shih, 1995, 1998; Ma, 1999). Or, the heterosexual romantic engagement of a man and woman manifests a clichéd ideological discourse aspiring to utopian hopes for peace, friendship, co-operation or reconciliation between their countries in the dramas (Hitchcock, 2002; Dasgupta, 2013). The endings of the dramas could be happy, friendly, antagonistic, or oppositional between confronting subjects in these political situations. The characters are stereotypes. They bear recognisable characteristics of particular countries. They invoke benign or hostile geo-political discourses written from the ideological viewpoints of the countries, address specific cultural exigency of the countries, and thus embody specific ideological concerns (Hitchcock, 2002).

When I applied these previous findings concerning the dramatisation of various cross-cultural relations to inter-Asian idol dramas, I was sensitive to the different political economic and cultural contexts in which the dramas were created, of Taiwanese societies in relation to those of other countries. I followed Shih (1995; 1998) in particular for my analyses of *Silence* and *Fathers' War*, two Taiwanese-PRC co-productions with the contexts across Taiwan Strait in 2005-2006 and 2010-2011. Regarding the representations of South Korean, Hong Kong and Japanese individuals living in Taiwan, in *Silence*, *Alice in Wonder City*, and *Gangster's Bakery*, in particular, I referenced the arguments of Chang (2010) and Sharon Chialan Wang (2009) about the filmic staging of foreigners settling down in Taiwan as an expression of a Taiwanese multicultural (and by extension, cosmopolitan) society in the making. The representation of an advanced Japanese subjectivity and an inferior Taiwanese subjectivity in terms of their capitalistic development, in *Gangster's Bakery*, *Alice in Wonder City* and *You Light up My Star*, owed much to the insights of Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh (2010a) and Kwai-Cheung Lo (2005; 2014) who critiqued the stereotypical representation of Japanese economic differences with non-Japanese countries in Japan's inter-Asian movies. Regarding the allegory of national relations in *Scent of Love* and *Fondant Garden*, I referred to Lo (2005), who analysed inter-Asian films where two male protagonists compete for power, and I saw the two dramas as invoking the economic relations of Taiwan and South Korea.

I identified the nationalities of these characters by observing their backgrounds. Many of them have clear national identities. Yet a few of them are “mixed-blood” or “bi-national”. The mixed-blood backgrounds sometimes have historical implications. For instance, the half-Japanese half Taiwanese female protagonist in *Alice in Wonder City* indicates the legacy of the long-term influence of Japan on Taiwan. At times, the bi-nationality is arbitrary, such as the South Korean protagonist of *Fondant Garden*, whose Taiwanese background only gives him proficiency in Mandarin. I analysed him as South Korean. For characters in the latter type, I defined their national identities by the nationalities they thematically connote.

### 3.2.3 Gender and Class Representations

Chapter 2.3.2.2 says that “women’s melodrama” is different from “women’s film”, the former being ideological fantasy coming from an East Asian patriarchal value system, whilst the latter reveals the real-life dilemmas confronted by contemporary East Asian women. To identify which type these dramas are, I closely followed the analytical methods of Fang-chih Irene Yang (2012) and Steve Fore (1993) on East Asian female film and TV drama, and mixed and matched their findings with my case study dramas. I observed the class differences between male and female protagonists and noted in what way any socio-economic conflict is resolved by the ends of the dramas.

My summaries revolved around these protagonists’ class identities (social economic backgrounds), the transformations of their characteristics, and their endings. I identified their class identities by mainly looking at their family backgrounds and professions. Here, observing the material conditions of the protagonists (such as house setting, clothing, appearance and any accessories they use) helped me do so. I did not find any working class background in the male protagonists in my case study dramas. In *Silence* and *Fondant Garden*, the male protagonists were analysed as upper class because their families own transnational companies which they are about to inherit. In *Scent of Love*, the male protagonist was analysed as an upper class because his mother owns a company and his lifestyle is quite well-to-do. In *Fathers’ War*, *Alice in Wonder City*, and *You Light up My Star*, the male protagonists have very successful careers and enjoy an above-average lifestyle. They were not born into rich families but their specific capabilities and talents enable them to climb the social ladder to become newly rich people. They were analysed as members of the newly rich urban class that is closer to upper class. The female protagonists

in the dramas, on the other hand, work as cooks, tour guides, actresses, bakers, documentary directors, etc. – are in fact contemporary urban working women, who, it is apparent, are working- or middle-class. Importantly, they generally remain economically inferior to the male protagonists, except the female protagonists in *Fathers' War* and *Gangster's Bakery* who are daughters born into rich families. The university student heroine in the *Gangster's Bakery* has not embarked on her career as yet.

I observed whether these dramas have rich patriarchal figures and whether these authoritative figures remain powerful or not. They are usually the protagonists' fathers or mothers and embody capitalist patriarchal discourses and sometimes Confucian values. They face situations in which their authority is challenged by a younger generation. In an essay on *Meteor Garden*, Yang (2012) argued that its hero is under the disciplinary control of his mother, a matriarchal capitalist figure. The hero, nonetheless, is a figure from a new generation – the rich class in the making. In doing so, Yang (2012) claimed that the story produces an ideological fantasy from a capitalist patriarchal discursive position by imagining that class conflict would be resolved when a young woman with good employment prospects marries a young future capitalist figure who under her influence becomes a more compassionate character. Yang influenced my examination of *Silence*, which illustrates a similar patriarchal control of its young protagonists. In a similar way, I identified two patriarchal figures who are presented in *Fathers' War* and analysed how their relationships with their children reach happy resolutions.

I observed whether or not any utopian gender-class fantasy or myth is present in the ways these dramas end. Not all of the dramas include gender-class discussion in their central storylines. The three Taiwanese-Japanese dramas do not have romance between classes as their subject-matter. *Alice in Wonder City*, *Gangster's Bakery* and *You Light up My Stars* have dual topics whereby their protagonists struggle with career and life difficulties as well as romantic love. Yet the Taiwanese TV dramas, co-operating with South Korean and PRC actors and companies, for example *Silence*, *Fathers' War*, *Scent of Love* and *Fondant Garden*, explicitly revolve around heterosexual romantic encounters between the rich and the middle/working class who derive from different East Asian societies. *Silence* and *Fondant Garden*, two dramas packaged by Angie Chai, have several character settings similar to Chai's successful TV drama *Meteor Garden*. There is obvious economic difference between the heroes and heroines in both *Silence* and *Fondant Garden*. In the *Fondant Garde*n, the rich man is South Korean whereas the Taiwanese female

protagonist is working/middle class. Yang's (2012) insights helped when I analysed the two dramas, e.g. in terms of the relationship of the male protagonists and their parents and the romantic happy ending as a fantastic resolution of class conflict. I examined the ideological implications at their conclusions, and also paid particular attention to the choices of the female protagonists for their romantic lovers.

I attended to forms of idealised femininities – the female behaviours, life goals and values that are represented via the end results of these female protagonists becoming the perfect standards or models – moulded jointly by East Asian Confucian and capitalistic patriarchal values. In these dramas, I analysed which idealised femininities that have appeared in other popular female TV dramas and films, such as *Meteor Garden* and *Dae Jang Geum*, have been iterated. I also analysed the virtues that have been assigned to the heroines by observing their behaviours, life goals, end results, etc. In which value system are the virtues rooted? Then I analysed whether the dramas belong to "women's melodramas" that are complicit with the patriarchal values, or express the dilemma of the values as "women's films". I looked to see if the patriarchal values are explicitly conveyed. I noted that the ideological discourses of the patriarchal values concerning idealised femininity are particularly apparent in *Fathers' War*, but *Scent of Love* shows contradictions in the idealised femininity. When I analysed the *Scent of Love* that thematises the tragedy of a reincarnated woman, Fore's (1993) analysis of a Hong Kong "women's film" that shares the theme helped.

# Chapter 4 Inter-Asian Packaging of Idol Drama

This chapter shifts attention to the idol drama productions conditioned more directly by Taiwanese and regional markets in the 2000s. Situated in a deregulated environment characterised by a free flow of popular Japanese and other foreign dramas to female audiences in the country, new Taiwanese drama makers came up with a contingent and opportunistic form of inter-Asian "package" of idol drama. They adapted manga and explored inter-Asian funding, presale and co-production to attract not only domestic but also regional markets. This chapter examines the development of idol drama, its markets and its characteristics. It explains how the Taiwanese TV drama industry discovered its competitive edge in the regional market. Then it focuses on the competition between Taiwanese idol drama makers and other East Asian drama industries in Taiwanese and overseas markets, especially three major overseas market blocks in South East Asia, the PRC and Japan, and several co-operation patterns of Taiwanese idol drama industry with non-Taiwanese media cultures and industries.

The first section analyses practices in the production of the pioneering work *Meteor Garden*, its target audiences and its regionalised employment of the means of production. In the early 2000s, when the major domestic TV stations were mainly speaking to their conventional market segments (older married women) with localist dramas and Sino-centric historical dramas, audiences in their teens and twenties were tempted by foreign imports, mainly on new cable and satellite TV channels. Observing this, new Taiwan-based drama makers (previously variety-show producers) who were sensitive to youngsters' tastes, broke into drama production and succeeded in winning particular sets of the domestic audience – female audiences in their teens and twenties. The debut of this home-grown youth-centred urban TV drama, which was then coined "Taiwanese idol drama", marked the generational shift in Taiwanese TV drama making.

Firstly, idol drama production was conditioned by Taiwanese media's post-colonial hybridisation of Japanese media culture and its pan-Chinese marketing business model, which were outcomes of Taiwanese post-colonial engagement with Japan, the existence of the trade route of ethnic Chinese media products in regional market and the selection of Mandarin as the official language in Taiwan during the KMT rule. Secondly, this drama harvested a surprising regional success by emulating a Japanese TV drama format and adapting a Japanese story. This Taiwanese product was in fact an alternative to the Japanese youth-centred dramas in East Asian

markets. It spoke to the gender and class issues of young Taiwanese women, who tended to be much concerned about their own life troubles. It also unintentionally addressed the similar anxieties of young East Asian female audiences by adapting a female fantasy originally from Japan. With their initial success, the drama producers were able to operate with and take advantage of the regional commercial TV drama distribution and link with other media industries, together constituting a heterogeneous East Asian drama production assemblage.

The chapter then charts idol drama's further inter-Asian packaging. It follows the footprints of the idol dramas that raised funding and employed elements from other East Asian media systems. The producers were driven by financial reasons – deteriorating domestic funding conditions and the existence of affluent neighbouring markets. The domestic condition included the loss of younger audiences and advertisement income to the Internet media, a lack of new funding from the private sector (e.g. sponsorship) and ownership transition of TV stations. In the meantime, the PRC media market was becoming affluent and demanding idol dramas; the Japanese had been importing them, and the much richer Japanese financiers had an interest in investing in this type of drama. Taiwanese idol drama's further packaging included the use of popular South Korean media culture, the incorporation of funding markets' elements, and the employment of Japanese actors and settings.

## 4.1 Initial Packaging of *Meteor Garden*

As Chapter 1 introduced, TV drama making in Taiwan had been occupied by Sino-centric dramas from the Old Three and localist dramas that resonated with the Taiwanese nation-building movement during the 1990s. Both types of dramas mainly targeted family and older married female audiences. Younger audiences were mainly attracted to foreign imports from Japan and the West, on satellite and cable TV as well as underground video circulation. Domestic productions had given up targeting them until 2001 when the new drama makers entered this terrain. The new drama makers, especially leading producers, were mainly the producers of the Old Three's variety shows. During the KMT era, these low-brow variety shows had been the most important windows for mediating foreign entertainment and popular culture. The variety-show producers, who were in charge of the completion of programming, were seen as the most knowledgeable media professionals in foreign popular cultural trends, either because they were

faithful fans of the foreign media or just understood the products for work (Feng, 2005). They had been making variety shows for domestic youngsters and been sensitive to these youngsters' tastes. They had been conveniently imitating Japanese variety shows as a workable programming format without paying for copyright of the shows' format to the Japanese media (S3, personal communication, Jan 25, 2013, p.2).[24] They were also familiar with popular culture business in Taiwan because their shows were the main platform for domestic pop singing idols and other singers.

Whether these variety-show producers broke into a drama career intentionally or unexpectedly, they finally had the chance in the year 2001. According to Angie Chai – one of the two producers of *Meteor Garden,* it was an "accident" when CTS (one of the Old Three) scouted for new content for its Thursday 9pm time slot to replace the then stagnant variety show on the time slot, *Love Textbook* (Lin, 2002). CTS asked the production company, Fulong Production Co., which had long been contracted to provide content for the time slot, to either give up the time slot or bring in a new commercially successful programme. Fulong's top producer plus Chief Executive Officer, Chai, who had been in charge of a highly commercially successful variety show, *Super Sunday*, aired at 8-10pm Sundays on CTS in the late 1990s, negotiated and was asked to take charge of the Thursday time slot. Later, Chai started to generate ideas for the time slot and decided to jointly found a new company, "Comic Ritz", with her colleague, Jerry Feng, who was in charge of the *Love Textbook* (Lin, 2002; M.-J. Lin, 2006b; Shan, 2009).

To start their drama career, they targeted the young domestic female audiences who were teenage or in their early twenties. The demographics were potentially faithful drama consumers, who would love to imagine drama heroes as their ideal lovers and search for ideal heroines for role models. Growing up in the 1990s, the target audience had no strong political stance and had formed their world view through consumption of foreign media. Before Chai and Feng, one or two teen dramas were aired on the Old Three, but had little commercial success (Jasun39, 2007). Even though Chai and Feng may have been the most successful variety-show producers in Taiwan at the time, making drama was still a huge career challenge. Luckily the CTS did not intervene and allowed them to choose their approach (Feng, 2006 cited in M.-J. Lin, 2006b, p.40).

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[24] Copying Japanese TV programmes was one convenient and low-cost innovation for the variety shows of the Old Three to increase popularity. This act of copying could be maintained because the Japanese media did not care much about its potential overseas profit (Iwabuchi, 2002, pp.86-88).

By 2000, the most popular foreign TV dramas in Taiwan were targeting these demographics; they were Japanese urban youth-centred dramas that packaged pop music and stylistic idol talents with beautiful love stories. The two drama makers assessed that the Taiwanese teen idol market was saturated with Hong Kong and Japanese idols, who also won fans as film and TV drama male leads because there was a lack of home-grown idols. Sensing this shortage of home-grown teen idols and dramas for Taiwan's urban female youngsters, they decided to fill the gap and establish their own talent pool rather than banking on young stars from elsewhere (e.g. Hong Kong), or younger actors whose personas were connected to Sino-centric and localist dramas. Casting their own contracted talents as lead actors in their own dramas would allow Chai and Feng to combine several commercially successful products into one project. Once the synergy worked, their actors would become idols overnight, and their company would become the centre of the next Taiwanese idol economy (Lin, 2002, p.90; Ma, 2005, p.156; Mao, 2011).

### 4.1.1 Post-Colonial Hybridisation and Standardised Chinese-Speaking Setting

Chai and Feng's talents might have been home-grown, but their format was Japanese. Being manga readers and unfamiliar with the existing circle of drama production, Feng and Chai decided to adapt Japanese manga artist Kamio Yoko's *Boys Over Flowers*, a best-selling Japanese manga that was serialised in Japanese comic magazine *Margaret* in 1992 and was imported to Taiwan with a Chinese title *Meteor Garden* (Chao, 2001; Feng, 2005; Deppman, 2009, p.96; iSUN@Taipei, 2011; Mao, 2011). It is a light romantic comedy about a poor but strong-willed girl and her romantic encounter with "F4" – four rich handsome teenage boys dominating their high school. The original manga was released in Taiwan a few years before the TV adaptation.[25] It became popular in the Taiwanese manga consumption market in which Japanese imports dominated domestic consumers' tastes (Ku, 1998; Wang, 2001). Its Japanese animation adaptation also had a high TV viewership in Taiwan (Mao, 2011; Chen, 2013). The manga (and its Japanese anime version) had had two market tests in Taiwan, so it would have a great chance of garnering another commercial success on TV. Feng even foresaw that the Japanese media would be interested in their new drama (M.-J. Lin, 2006b, p.42).

[25] After extensive search, I was unable to trace the exact year in which the manga *Boys Over Flowers* was officially imported into Taiwan. However, Taiwanese media started reporting on its popularity in Taiwan since January 1997 (Pai, 1997). Thus, the manga seemed to have circulated in Taiwan during 1996 or even earlier.

Although the storyline had been circulating in East Asia, this type of TV drama was "new" in domestic drama making in terms of content and target audience (Arpon, 2010). Director Tsai Yueh-Hsun was also new in serial drama directing.[26] Barbie Hsu, a girl-idol-singer-turned-variety-show-host was cast as the heroine. Chai and Feng then cast four new young male talents as male leads (Jerry Yan, Ken Chu, Vanness Wu and Vic Chou), who were either fashion models, singing talents, or ordinary individuals who did not have formal acting training. They were chosen mainly because they looked physically similar to the manga characters "F4". The two producers prioritised physical similarity between actor and character over acting ability: young talents can still touch audiences if they are guided properly by directors (Lin, 2002, p.94; *Our Talk Show*, 2012; Chai, 2015 cited in Golden Bell Awards, 2015a).[27] Once audiences accept them, these young talents might have a chance to grow into professional performers (*Our Talk Show*, 2012). To deal with the new leads' lack of acting performance, the production team gave them a few hours of urgent acting training for the pending shoots, and employed veteran actors for supporting roles to help them on set (Li, 2004; Hsu, 2006 cited in Latsyrc, 2006).

The textual dimension of *Meteor Garden* is hybrid on many levels. This hybridisation is a consequence of the Taiwanese consumption of Japanese media culture and Western media influence. In terms of TV drama format, the crew emulated Japanese TV drama's visual presentation and aesthetic styles (Kao, 2004, p.194). They also used Western pop songs for background music.[28] In terms of the drama world view constituted through language and background, *Meteor Garden* presents a hybridisation of Mandarin and Japanese. Its protagonists' names are in Japanese but are pronounced in Mandarin, which is how Taiwanese viewers of its original manga would read the names. According to Tsung-yi Michelle Huang (2006, p.485), the contemporary Taiwanese public have adopted many Japanese terms and phrases in the language, since there is a high degree of similarity between written Japanese characters (Kanji)

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[26] Tsai Yueh-Hsun, who was 32 years old, was scouted to direct the drama and guide the new talents to act in front of camera alongside some theatre-turned-TV workers responsible for the performing training. Tsai started his career as a screen actor and off-screen worker in the late 1980s and began his directing career in the late 1990s. He had mostly worked for one-episode TV dramas featuring Mandarin pop music and singers and had only directed a 40-episode Buddhist Da-Ai TV drama before sitting on the director's seat of *Meteor Garden* (Tung, 2007; *Our Talk Show*, 2012).

[27] Tsai recalled that as he had worked with many new talents, he had been very good at interacting with them, very patient, and was able to encourage them to show their emotions and feelings in their acting (*Our Talk Show*, 2012).

[28] *Meteor Garden* was also an unprecedented case in Taiwanese TV drama making as it considerably used Western pop songs by Coldplay, Martine McCutcheon, etc. for background music to signify the emotions of the characters so as to appeal to a young audience. It was agreed the songs would appear in the drama free of charge because the producers, who were veterans of variety-show production, were well connected with major music labels. In sum, its cinematography and music was fresh and unprecedented at the time of its broadcasting (Ma, 2005).

and written Chinese characters. Japanese names can be pronounced in Mandarin. Consequently, the producers did not intend to completely change the Japanese names. Instead, they seemingly wanted the TV adaptation to offer an atmosphere when viewed very similar to how Taiwanese youth read Japanese manga (Lin, 2002, p.90; Kao, 2004, pp.163-164; Mao, 2010). According to Sharon Mao, the scriptwriter for *Meteor Garden*, the drama's production staff wanted it to be identical with the manga in terms of protagonists' names in production. They did not think to rename the protagonists with Chinese names because they thought that the manga's fans in Taiwan would criticise them if they changed these names. They cared very much about the feedback of the Taiwanese audiences who are familiar with Japanese language and media culture (Mao, 2010).

According to Chi-Hsiang Kao (2004, pp.58-69) and Hsiu-Chuang Deppman (2009), Japanese original *Boys Over Flowers* is set in specific Japanese post-bubble economic recession but *Meteor Garden* only has a non-specific temporal spatial setting, showing ambiguous national boundary and selective presentation of local traces, issues and history. This was because *Meteor Garden*'s producers were part of the Chinese-speaking media industries that took advantage of the pan-Chinese market in East Asia that have used Mandarin as lingua franca whilst *Boys Over Flowers* adhered to the domestic orientation of Japanese media industries and mainly addressed Japanese domestic issues (Deppman, 2009).

*Meteor Garden*'s characters mainly communicate in Mandarin. This characteristic has been commonly shared by other idol dramas. Mandarin is the primary language of *Meteor Garden* (and by extension, idol drama) for domestic and foreign reasons.[29] Concerning the domestic environment of idol drama, I argue that Mandarin is the main language in idol drama due to the request of domestic commercial channels that have aired idol dramas (the Old Three) and the general linguistic cultural environment in Taiwan.[30] At the time when idol drama was to emerge from the Old Three at the end of the 1990s, Mandarin still enjoyed a relative privilege status in media (Kloter, 2006, p.219). As chapter 1.3.2 introduced, there was fierce competition between Mandarin and Hokkien over the 8-9pm drama time slot in the Taiwanese TV market in the 1990s

[29] Since I started watching idol dramas, I found out that almost all idol dramas I have watched adopt Mandarin as their primary language.

[30] Virginia Liu had a similar account of idol drama's prioritisation of Mandarin. In our interview, she explained that main characters in *Scent of Love* (her production that was aired in 2003 and featured South Korean characters and cultural elements), even its South Korean characters, spoke Mandarin in most of their scenes due to the preference of the Taiwanese TV industry and the habits of the Taiwanese viewers (personal communication, Mar 26, 2013, p.17).

(Ko, 1999; F.-c. I. Yang, 2008c, pp.283-285; 2015). Yet although the Hokkien-speaking dramas were gaining ground at the 8-9pm time slot, the 9-11pm drama time slot targeting married women and the prime-time variety shows targeting youngsters on Saturday and Sunday at the Old Three, such as *Super Sunday* for which Angie Chai was the main producer, maintained largely the Mandarin language, for instance. In terms of dissemination, Mandarin was used by more Taiwanese people than Hokkien. Mandarin remained the official language in Taiwan, even though Taiwanese society had been distancing itself from the KMT's Sino-centrism and resisting PRC's political agenda (Kloter, 2006, p.219). Urban North Taiwan predominantly used Mandarin (Curtin, 2007, p.168). It may be argued that female teenagers and women in their early twenties in urban Taiwan were Mandarin-speakers, in addition to their own ethnic languages.

The prioritisation of Mandarin also relates to the foreign marketing of idol drama. S7 explained that an actor who usually speaks Hokkien on stage had to speak Mandarin in 98% of his scenes in idol drama *Gangster's Bakery* (2014) for its pan-Asian marketing (personal communication, Mar 15, 2013, p.4). In the view of Fang-chih Irene Yang (2015, pp.173-174), idol drama mainly uses Mandarin for the consideration of East Asian markets, in particular, the market of PRC where Mandarin is the official language, whilst Hokkien-speaking dramas have been regarded as having no immediate foreign trade market (Yang, 2008c, p.283; 2015, pp.174-175).

For the consideration of overseas marketing, idol drama controls the presence of Hokkien and other ethnic languages. This does not mean that Hokkien and other ethnic languages are totally absent in idol drama. I found out that Hokkien has appeared occasionally in idol dramas, yet it has been arranged at a secondary position. It is usually used by senior characters who have Hoklo backgrounds. Young protagonists originating from Hoklo families would speak Mandarin when talking to their colleagues or peers in the workplace or school and speak both Hokkien and Mandarin when talking to their parents. In our interview, the head of GTV drama programming mentioned to me a similar approach to the language issue in its idol dramas, in which protagonists may mainly speak Mandarin and communicate to characters from the countryside with Hokkien (B2, personal communication, Feb 26, 2013, p.9). This approach seemed to reflect her common-sensical perception of how urban Taiwanese youngsters communicate today. Fang-chih Irene Yang (2013, pp.1083-1086) obtained a similar observation. Moreover, Yang criticises some stereotypical representations of vulgar, naïve and lower-class Hoklo characters in idol dramas in contrast to elegant *waishengren* characters that reproduced the *waishengren*-centred ethnic

hierarchy.[31] In a nutshell, the aforementioned domestic and foreign reasons have driven idol drama to present a generally standardised Chinese-speaking setting (a Mandarin world), in which Taiwanese ethnic stereotypes would be presented.

In terms of drama consumptions of female teenagers and women in their early twenties in urban Taiwan, they tended to watch romantic dramas which concentrated on the small personal and emotional world of women (F.-M. Lin, 2006; Yang, 2008a; b; c; 2012; Huang, 2008). The reason might be two-fold. Their lives had been directed to domestic domain, such as marriage and rearing children in the patriarchal Taiwanese society, so that they had not been as engaging to national politics as male nationalists themselves. With the wish to have a happy marriage in their lives, they had hoped for ideal romantic love relationship that would lead to such a marriage, and thus they had been supplied with romantic love dramas from commercial cultural and media industries (F.-M. Lin, 2006; Berlant, 2008; Yang, 2012, pp.420-421). Gradually they internalised the apoliticalness and would not demand TV dramas that have strong link to particular Taiwanese socio-historical background (Yang, 2012, pp.420-421).

Even though these women had multiple options of foreign imports, they had chosen Japanese manga, especially the genre coined in Japanese as “shojo (teenage girl) manga” targeting teenage Japanese girls. *Boys Over Flowers* belongs to the genre of shojo manga. It may be argued that the most important factor contributing to *Meteor Garden*’s narrow focus on the small, emotional and private world of individuals and its detachment from Taiwanese political agendas, had less to do with it being an adaptation of manga than its target audience, who were keener to resolve their emotional and female desires, rather than become actively engaged with the political and cultural movements in Taiwan. The story, concerning teenagers’ life on campus, and their family life, created a very personal world which could detach itself from macro political, social and historical events.

### 4.1.2 Inter-Asian Remediation of Young Female Fantasy

*Meteor Garden* soon had a high viewership when it was aired on Thursday 12 April 2001 in Taiwan (Huang, 2001; Nien, 2001a; b). It attracted young Taiwanese female audiences and became a

[31] For criticism of the prioritisation of Mandarin and suppression of Hokkien in commercial Taiwanese TV dramas, refer to Yu-Fen Ko (1999) and Fang-chih Irene Yang (2008c; 2013; 2015).

phenomenal success over the next two to three years in South East Asia (Singapore, Indonesia, Vietnam and Malaysia), mainland China and then Japan and South Korea (Kao, 2004; Liu, 2006; Y.-Y. Li, 2007; Chen, 2008, p.178; Chi 2008; Hsu and Weng, 2008; Ida, 2008; Zhu, 2008, p.90; Deppman, 2009; Heryanto, 2010; Kawamura, 2011; Chou, 2012, pp.67-74). Teenager and young women in Taiwan and many parts of East Asia started taking an interest in Taiwan's new generational TV dramas and idol talents. There were two different reasons for its East Asian popularity. It was initially popular among relatively developing countries, including Taiwan, Hong Kong, South East Asia and mainland China (Chen, 2008, p.178; Ida, 2008; Zhu, 2008, p.90; Deppman, 2009; Heryanto, 2010). It did not enter Japan until 2003 and its popularity there was connected to the Japanese post-colonial cultural relationship with non-Japanese East Asia.[32] I will discuss this in detail later in the current chapter. The Japanese female audience consumed many non-Japanese East Asian TV dramas for the pristine, soft and friendly East Asian masculinity of the idol talents (Chou, 2012, pp.67-74) and it can be argued that their pleasure was embedded in the Japanese collective nostalgia of an optimistic phase of modernisation (Iwabuchi, 2002, p.159).

Indonesian audiences, in two case studies, were more interested in the gender-class relations and values of the modern individuals in *Meteor Garden* (Ida, 2008; Heryanto, 2010). In the studies, its main attraction comes from the depiction of masculinity and femininity in an urbanised society with a strong Confucian trait. According to Indonesian research (Ida, 2008; Heryanto, 2010), the *Meteor Garden* and the four handsome ethnic Chinese idols from Taiwan caused wide discussion among the female Muslim audience who lived in a local community that witnessed tension between indigenous Indonesians and ethnic Chinese immigrants. Also, the young female audience contrasted this East Asian heterosexual romance to love scenes in Western media and felt that the former had more conservative depictions of love and character appearances (no smoking and tattoos). Lovers in the drama kiss but do not have premarital sex. The male protagonist demonstrates non-smoking, clean, pretty and young masculinity with a macho quality in some contexts. The modern Cinderella is brave and self-sufficient, faces daily troubles and has the ability to transform the male protagonist to the positive side of humanity.

[32] *Meteor Garden* was aired in South Korea (Hsu and Weng, 2008). However, there have been no researches, even industrial reports, about the reception of Taiwanese idol dramas in South Korea.

*Meteor Garden* was aired in the PRC for a few episodes in March 2002 but soon was banned by the PRC government which judged that the depictions of teenagers' school life in the drama encouraged materialism and school bullying and that the drama would negatively influence youth (Chen, 2008, p.178). Despite this, the drama was hugely popular in the PRC through piracy.

Hsiu-Chuang Deppman (2009, p.94) notes that its regional sensation was related to regionally shared female aspirations in contemporary East Asian societies. It seems that, although Chai and Feng were mainly thinking about the desire of young local Taiwanese women, this female desire was similar to that of other young East Asian women, especially in South East Asia and mainland China. Critics noted that young East Asian urban women were feeling more pressure about their life within the environment of neo-liberal economic development and the widening class gap in the post-colonial patriarchal countries (Barlow, 2007; Yang, 2012, pp.425-430). These countries were mostly undergoing drastic economic transitions triggered by the Asian financial crisis in 1997, and female audiences in these countries were negotiating between economic security via conforming to patriarchal rules, and gender autonomy under East Asian patriarchal nationalist regimes. Heterosexual romance/marriage to a rich young man – a future capitalist – might have been viewed as the quickest way to resolve the problem. The urban romantic fantasy provided escape as an imaginary resolution to deal with female class anxiety and desire for a consumerist lifestyle. This was why young teenage female audiences were keen to consume idol drama, yet the fantastic stories provided to them were complicit with patriarchal capitalist ideas. The newness of the *Meteor Garden* as utopian heterosexual romance is that the heroine has a decent job even though she is surrounded by rich men. Yet such plot innovation is also noted as being complicit with capitalist values which desire women to enter the workforce (Fore, 1993; Lin and Tong, 2008, pp.111-114; Deppman, 2009, pp.105-106).

The Taiwanese adaptation tried to be identical to the manga by casting four Taiwanese men who resembled the original manga figures and by depicting the teenagers' world, such as on-campus bullying, friendship, girls' self-sufficiency and male transition to manhood (Lin, 2002). The four young handsome heroes are an imagined ideal of an East Asian patriarchal figure in the contemporary world. In terms of their character, they are still shaping their personality and are able to transform into human-centred individuals under class intersection with and influence from a working-class heroine (Yang, 2012, p.427). In terms of their appearance, the ideal urban young men are tall (more than 180 cm), fit and beautiful; they have no rebellious tattoos and do not go

in for premarital sex (Ida, 2008; Heryanto, 2010). *Meteor Garden* is also a drama about generational politics, which is conveyed through several patterns of protagonist-parent relations (Yang, 2012, p.428). The parent-children relationship is constantly split or troublesome, the youth looking for a better and more utopian world.

There was a key difference between the Japanese and the rest of the East Asian societies. Whilst many East Asian societies were embracing strong economic growth, Japan had already stepped into a post-bubble economic recession at the beginning of the 1990s – a decade labelled Japan's "lost decade" due to its economic underperformance (Powell, 2009). Confronted with the social crises in the 1990s (Woronoff, 1996), Japanese media industries responded with diverse media products (Ito, 2004, p.25). In the Japanese manga industry, the shojo manga, *Boys Over Flowers* as an example, is simply a specific girl-oriented genre among a variety of genres, such as adult manga (Kinsella, 2000; Toku, 2007; Choo, 2008, pp.277-279). Similar to many previous successful media products targeting young female audiences (Ito, 2004, p.32), the *Boys Over Flowers* offered ambivalent messages to its target audiences. It thematised gradual positive relationship between a poor girl and rich, handsome boys, thereby involving escapist Cinderella fantasy. Yet, as a post-bubble-economic Japanese cultural product, it nevertheless shared a spirit with other Japanese media products to establish its readership with a trace of progressive "post-fairy-tale socialism", conveyed in its portrayal of the heroine's consistent resistance to capitalist social order, according to Deppman (2009, pp.106-107). Hence, it may be argued that *Boys Over Flowers* belonged to that section of Japanese media that delivered the most traditional gender and class resolutions whereas the majority of Japanese media products were more concerned with addressing the problem of how to survive in a post-bubble economy, and tackling complicated urban human relationships.

At the same time, non-Japanese East Asian countries had not encountered economic crisis yet until the late 1990s. The majority of individuals in non-Japanese East Asian societies, had more traditional (Confucian) attitudes and lifestyles that had mingled with capitalistic development model (Choi, 2010, pp.128-129). In societies ruled by relatively more traditional patriarchal dominations, the majority of *Meteor Garden*'s East Asian audience tended to seek fairy tales involving heterosexual marriage rather than seeking more progressive media templates. The resolutions of *Boys Over Flowers*, which are ambivalently progressive yet in general conservative, met these demands embedded in the non-Japanese value systems in East Asia.

This can be proved by the difference between *Meteor Garden* and *Boys Over Flowers* noted by Deppman (2009, pp.104-108), who argues that, in their endings, the *Meteor Garden* is more "pragmatist", giving a conservative message in which capitalistic social order absorbs dissension, which was initially embodied by the heroine, and maintains its dominance, whilst the *Boys Over Flowers* is "socialist", with the heroine maintaining a distance from patriarchal capitalism. In the ending of the original manga, the protagonists do not end up entering marriage. They are just about to develop their relationship. The first instalment of the TV adaptation conveys a similar message about the heroine's future: it has an open ending concerning female autonomy and submission to patriarchy. But in the sequel to the TV adaptation, the heroine submits to a marriage with the patriarchal symbol (the hero). I argue that this narrative closure can be seen as a negotiated outcome between her class mobility and female independence. This drama seemingly provided the most accepted resolution for this gender issue to its regional audience and became the most inter-Asian phenomenon of Taiwanese TV. It seems that the targeted East Asian female audiences were inclined to more traditional values and resolutions and had not yet entered a phase of looking for more modern and individualist options. The disparity between Japan and non-Japan East Asia was later proved by the popularity of South Korean media in the latter's market.

### 4.1.3 Contributions towards Taiwanese Soft Power (in Female-Centred Economy)

The success of *Meteor Garden* made the new home-grown dramatic idol talents famous overnight, igniting overseas interest in purchasing similar Taiwanese products, especially dramas starring the four talents-turned-stars actors and Barbie Hsu. The four actors even assembled an idol group called F4 (after the manga characters "F4"), which had concert tours in the 2000s. TV drama was now a part of the Taiwanese "idol economy", and a more integral part of the pop idol vehicle.[33] Idol drama producers began incubating their own contracted talent pool which was

[33] For example, F4 were collaboratively incubated by the team of Feng, Chai, and Tsai. Feng incubated other idol talents, such as Fahrenheit, which also provided a stable cast for his dramas throughout the decade (*Sina Entertainment*, 2015). These producers' works are driven by and centre on talents/stars. They scout for and make talented performers into rising stars, rely on the talents' fame and create new personas of the rising stars to guarantee their East Asian marketing (S3, personal communication, Jan 25, 2013, p.2). The idol talents would be remediated by pop music and other celebrity-related media. Pop music talents would be featured in drama to gain fame before releasing an album; acting talents would feed the pop music industry's demand for new faces, usually singing for dramas (Lin, 2002, p.94). The overall revenue came from drama sales, the sales of drama-derivative products and particularly the derivative profits of idols' stage performances, concert tours, and product endorsement in East Asian markets (Yang, 2005). This integrated business model scouted talents from fashion model agencies and pop singing agencies (Mao, 2011).

nonetheless smaller than those of Japanese or South Korean talent agencies (Lin, 2002). The local industry seemingly was able to compete with foreign imports for the young female audiences of the region, to a certain degree. Chai and Feng, as well as their staff and crew, were able to build up their track record with this new home-grown media business orienting towards regional audiences.[34] Chai and Feng were coined as idol drama's birth mother and father (Feng, 2001; M.-J. Lin, 2006b, p.39). Importantly, their success created opportunities for other Taiwanese TV drama makers who also wanted to make idol dramas.[35] It is no surprise that their commercial business model was soon quickly exploited (Liu and Chen, 2004, pp.69-70). The domestic TV channels produced similar dramas in the following two years (Wu and Jiang, 2010a, pp.12-13). Most of these dramas were produced quickly and thus lacked quality (Chen, 2004). This oversupply jeopardised the general production condition of the business as the domestic audience were soon fed up with them and became very selective, according to Jerry Feng (2006 cited in M.-J. Lin, 2006b, pp.40-41). However, eventually, Sundays 10-11.30 pm became the flagship time slot for idol dramas since early 2003 when the Old Three aired three idol dramas head-to-head. The time slot provided a stable platform in the cultivation of the domestic-audience base of the idol drama (Wu and Jiang, 2010a, pp.13-15).[36]

It is fair to say that, during the 2000s, several independent production companies, especially Comic Ritz (run by Angie Chai), Comic International (run by Jerry Feng), Prajna Works (run by Tsai Yueh-Hsun) and Power Generation Entertainment (run by Virginia Liu) and two Taiwan-based satellite TV channels Gala TV Station (GTV) and Sanlih Entertainment Television Company (SET), formed the major power houses of idol dramas. The production companies run by Angie Chai, Jerry Feng and Virginia Liu released idol dramas since 2001 and 2002 at a fairly consistent pace and usually screened them on the important idol drama time slot on Sunday. They also had produced above-average idol dramas in terms of expense, establishing with clear

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[34] The two producers did not recoup all their expenditure for the drama solely from the drama's financial returns, but they gained cultural prestige and symbolic capital, and particularly fame and professional credits (Nien, 2001c; Lin, 2002, p.92). Chai (2002 cited in Lin, 2002, p.92) explained that in the beginning she still adopted the financial logic of variety shows in which a producer spends the biggest amount of money in the first pilot week to attract audiences and then reduces the amount in later weeks to the minimum. She found out that drama making is different: more money needs pouring in at the later stages of production.

[35] Virginia Liu admitted that *Meteor Garden*'s success provided a chance for her to produce dramas and provided them to market (P1, personal communication, Mar 26, 2013, pp.1-2).

[36] There was a minor adjustment to its starting time from 9.30pm to 9.40pm and eventually 10pm. Another secondary time slot for idol dramas is on Saturdays 9-11pm on terrestrial and satellite TV channels. PTS has a time slot on Saturdays 9-11pm. Since 2008, idol drama has had a new time slot on Fridays 10-12pm on terrestrial and satellite TV channels (Wu and Jiang, 2010a, pp.13-15).

brand image as independent companies. Tsai Yueh-Hsun did not produce idol drama annually but he attracted audiences by producing the most expensive quality idol dramas. S3 (personal communication, Jan 25, 2013, p.2) commented that Angie Chai, Jerry Feng, Tsai Yueh-Hsun and Virginia Liu were very important pioneers of idol drama business before SET and GTV's entry of the business. An article by Yi-Kuo Wu and Yi-Hui Jiang (2010a, p.5) has similar account. They argue that GTV and SET produced idol dramas at network level and list six companies that produced idol dramas and provided them to networks as independent brands, including Angie Chai's Comic Ritz, Jerry Feng's Comic International, Virginia Liu's Power Generation Entertainment and Tsai Yueh-Hsun's Prajna Works. Wu and Jiang also include Peggy Ko's Domani Production and Doze Niu's Honto Production. I have not included the two companies because Peggy Ko usually worked for GTV as a subcontractor company and her work is seen as GTV productions in my thesis. Niu has not produced idol dramas annually in my own observation. During 2001 and 2010, he only produced two idol dramas, *Say Yes Enterprise* (2004) and *Wayward Kenting* (2007).

Idol drama's effects have now in general been understood as "soft power". "Soft power" was initially an American concept coined in 1990 by Joseph Nye that encouraged the US government to maintain its international domination over foreign countries through the export of education, ideology and (media) culture. This power form is practised through "persuasion" rather than "military coercion" (Chua, 2012a, p.65). It operates in the cultural terrain and is involved in competition between different ideological and value systems. What we call "soft power" today used to be regarded as media imperialism during the time when Hollywood media operated as an instrument for the US, to disseminate its individualistic, liberal and capitalistic value system, thereby jeopardising local media industries. With the ascendance of multiple centres in several regional blocs, the world now seems less in the Cold-War framework and is in a new entangled form of global competition and mutual penetration. The new competing countries emulate the US success for at least gaining economic benefit from, firstly, media export and, secondly, foreign tourism and further international influence and visibility. For many East Asian countries, especially small countries that do not have "hard power", they can influence foreign attitudes and perceptions towards them through cultural exports as a means of "soft power" seeking a reaction in a positive way, hence creating more material and non-material benefits (Chua, 2012b, p.17).

The soft power of idol dramas was later identified by the idol drama industry, the public and the government in Taiwan. *Meteor Garden* caused a craze for visiting the shooting location (Chu, 2003). For the target audience, it was not right to say that *Meteor Garden* was in a "complete social vacuum" because it half-heartedly indicated that it was set in a city in Taiwan. Like many commercial films and TV, the idol drama had the power of what Jean Baudrillard (1994) coined "simulacra", creating an imagined world using the modernised landscape of Taiwan as a big studio lot. The *Meteor Garden* ambivalently delivered a "modern Taiwanese cultural scent" through the fitful use of contemporary Taiwanese urban landmarks and consumer spaces as well as popular idioms, slang and new urban phrases. Production crews searched for "beautiful" or even "astonishing" scenes to meet production demands (Tsai, 2009 cited in Lan, 2009). The non-specific urban backdrop setting also enabled the drama makers to shoot in newly furbished modern spaces from different cities across Taiwan (Tsai, 2009 cited in Lan, 2009). The mediated "Taiwan" that audiences received was enhanced, modern and pretty. The audience might recognise and associate the Taiwanese shooting location with the fictional worlds. Even though the female audience knew that the female-oriented narrative was just fantastic, they visited the actual shooting locations to experience the fictional space symbolising romantic love. Pretty soon, idol dramas were considered a powerful promotion tool for Taiwanese tourism, and the fictional characters were the best model consumers, introducing audiences to various Taiwanese resorts, restaurants, beaches, shops, bookshops, cultural spots and anywhere that provided consumer goods. These consumer spaces used as backgrounds were detailed in the media. For instance, newspapers detailed the shooting locations of *Meteor Garden* in Taiwan and framed them as one thematic tour of Taiwan (Liu, 2007). Gradually, the idol drama became an effective promotion tool of the modern face of Taiwan to the world, mainly Japan and South Korea (A.-C. Li, 2007; Y.-Y. Li, 2007; Sung, 2015, p.46). In 2007, the Taiwanese government employed the four actors who played F4 in *Meteor Garden* to promote Taiwan to Japanese and South Korean tourism (Huang, 2007; *Apple Daily*, 2008).[37] Shooting locations of idol dramas have been highlighted by Taiwanese government to help tourism business.[38] Many municipal governments also started

[37] News about the employment can also be found on the website of Taiwanese Bureau of Tourism that is available at: http://theme.taiwan.net.tw/epaper/chi/20070316.htm [Accessed 31 March 2016].

[38] For instance, National Chung Chen University in mid-south Taiwan has become a tourist spot for being the shooting location of the fictional college in *Meteor Garden* (Chu, 2003). Similar account is also available at: http://travel.culture.tw/template/StrokePage.aspx?Sid=189 [Accessed 31 March 2016].

supporting idol dramas via funding or production support in exchange for placing their local spots in idol dramas in 2004 (Huang, 2016, p.20).

Tourism has occupied the centre of idol dramas' soft power. Its power to glamorise tourist spots and to bring tourists to them has become the most central driving force for the Taiwanese economy to recognise its significance. The idols, with their influence on the target audience, have been perfect partners for consumer goods. The commodity endorsement of these talents would bring economic benefit to the talent agency department of the production company, which would indirectly cover its drama production expenditure. In 2006, the Bureau of Tourism of the ROC government contracted the idol group F4 as the presenter of Taiwan to Japanese and South Korean tourists; in the following years, more idol celebrities endorsed domestic tourism (Huang, 2007; *Apple Daily*, 2008; Sung, 2015). Taking advantage of public acknowledgment, the idol drama industry has become active in framing itself as an important showcase of Taiwanese modernity and local tourism (Yang, 2009a; F.-C. Chu, 2011; Pan, 2012; Huang, 2016). Idol drama has thus been nationalised by soft power. The soft power of *Meteor Garden* and the following idol dramas has offered the export-oriented drama industry one way to show its national loyalty to Taiwan. Although the dramas are fictional, the locations are in Taiwan. I argue that this place-based loyalty is the key for Taiwanese society to identify with the idol drama industry. Discoursing its economic benefit to Taiwan, the industry became eligible to ask for state support.

In summary, based on the marginal Taiwan and targeting the East Asian market, successful idol dramas balanced between regional and local/domestic concerns, demonstrated the modern faces of Taiwanese society and at the same time addressed shared cultural interests among the domestic and the regional areas. To do so, the export-oriented dramas had to selectively present domestic culture and overlook some domestically specific issues and history. Although the inter-Asian mobility of idol drama has been recognised as an important asset to the Taiwanese economy, public identification with idol drama has been conditional. The bottom line has been to make a "Taiwan-based" drama and this "Taiwan-based" criterion can have many forms. Minimally, Taiwan should be the main location of shooting. I will discuss the criteria of public acceptance, which was formalised in state subsidy in the mid-2000s, in more detail later.

## 4.2 More Patterns of Inter-Asian Packaging

Two main factors have been driving the idol drama production companies, especially the independent production companies led by producers like Chai and Feng, to be more inter-Asian in finance and the production process throughout the 2000s. The first factor was the lack of domestic funding and the second, the existence of more affluent markets in East Asia.

Despite the initial success of the inter-Asian packaging, the industry has not had a good domestic industrial environment. Angie Chai and Jerry Feng spent NT$1,000,000 (£20,000) per episode on average for the *Meteor Garden* but the CTS only allotted around NT$700,000 (£14,000) per 70-min episode to it (Chao, 2001; Liu, 2001; Nien, 2001c; Lin, 2002, p.92). Angie Chai tried to recoup the extra cost by selling the drama's foreign distribution rights (Liu, 2001; iSUN@Taipei, 2011). Furthermore, the average budget for drama production in the Old Three had been shrinking in recent years (Chao, 2012; S.-H. Lo, 2014; Hsu, 2015 cited in Golden Bell Awards, 2015b).[39] Shunning the risk and responsibility of drama production, the Old Three would only consider purchasing programme broadcast rights for domestic producers' works, even for prime-time slots (Chao, 2012; P2, personal communication, Feb 20, 2013, p.1; Chiu, Chiu and Hsu, 2015, p.108). The vertical disintegration of TV programming led to the programme market being between the programme provider (independent production companies) and broadcasters. The former has produced dramas and sold to the latter and overseas markets (Chiu, 2009; 2012; Lan, 2009; Chao, 2012; Chai, 2015 cited in Golden Bell Awards, 2015a). In this mode, an idol drama project could enjoy a higher production budget at NT$1.8 million (£36,000) per 70-minute episode on average (Government Information Office, 2011, p.16). Among this, around NT$700,000 (£14,000) would likely come from the domestic terrestrial TV broadcasting. The extra expense must be recouped mainly from overseas sales (Chao, 2012; P2, personal communication, Feb 20, 2013, p.3). Chi-Hsiang Kao had a similar finding. In Kao's study, an idol drama was likely to raise NT$600,000 to 700,000 (£12,000 to 14,000) per 70-minute episode in total from a domestic terrestrial TV channel and a satellite TV channel that aired it in 2004. It then

[39] The terrestrial TV channels' production fee for a Monday-Friday one-hour Hokkien-speaking serial drama in the 8-9pm time slot was NT$1,400,000 (£28,000) per episode in 2001 but it allotted the same amout per episode to a Monday-Friday two-hour serial drama in the 8-10pm time slot in 2008 (Hsu, 2015 cited in Golden Bell Awards, 2015b). In other words, the production fee for the latter was reduced by half. The terrestrial TV channels' funding for idol drama has also been reduced over the years. Angie Chai (2012 cited in Chao, 2012) revealed that the production budget from Taiwanese TV stations only accounted for one fourth of her production expenses by the end of 2012.

raised more money by selling distribution rights for overseas markets. The overseas revenue ranged from US$8,000 to 20,000 (£6,100 to 15,227) per episode (Kao, 2004, p.94, p.168).[40]

In the beginning years, the drama production companies enjoyed a stronger bargaining power in the domestic programming market. The Old Three were willing to bid for domestic dramas as the audience had a craze for home-grown dramas, mainly due to the success of *Meteor Garden* and many other dramas featuring rising idol stars (Li, 2003). At this time TV, the traditional medium, was not seriously affected by the Internet, in terms of advertising revenue. There were only a few good options for home-grown idol dramas, and TV broadcasters were more willing to bid for a well-produced idol drama's broadcasting right with a higher-than-average price (Li, 2003).

Gradually the financial condition worsened. During the 2000s until 2012 when product placement was approved by the government, the Taiwanese TV stations faced more crises, jointly caused by the already fragmented market, the loss of younger audiences to the Internet, and the lack of alternative advertisement income. Commercial TV advertisement in general had not grown much because of the overall slowdown of the Taiwanese economy (Feng, 2008).[41] Also, these terrestrial and satellite TV were losing young audiences to the Internet and consequently advertisements that were targeted at young people (Yang, Tu and Chen, 2013; Lee, 2014). Moreover, the TV stations experienced a digital shift so they had been under great financial pressure (Chang, 2014a; b). This circumstance led the TV networks to hope to attract older and larger female audience groups to sustain themselves in the short term and thus they tended to air TV dramas that covered broader female demographics, ranging from teenager to audiences between 25 and 44 (the main target of commercial advertisers) (Kao, 2004, p.164, p.185; Wu and Jiang, 2010a, p.9; Wang, 2016). They were not doing clear targeting but instead wished to cover wider female audience groups. The TV networks and, consequently, drama makers also tended to stick to financially safe templates and were not taking risks to experiment in diversifying genres and targeting markets (Maple, 2015a; b).

[40] The figures in US dollar are converted to British Pounds at the exchange rate of 1 US dollar to 0.76 British Pounds, as in August 2016.

[41] Taiwanese economy has not gone well since the late 1990s after the Asian economic crisis and thus the advertising segment in Taiwanese media has not increased much. According to research of Chien-san Feng (2008, p.220), the Old Three have been in deficit since 2002.

What was worse was the ownership transition of the Old Three during the 2000s. After the power shift in 2000, the Old Three were either privatised or transferred into public TV in the mid-2000s.[42] TTV and CTV were privatised. Since 2007, TTV has been mainly owned by Taiwan-based businessmen Huang Song and a pro-independence businessman Lin Jung-San, who already runs a pro-independence newspaper *Liberty Times* (*the China Post*, 2007; *Apple Daily*, 2007). After a few rounds of mergers and acquisitions during 2006 and 2008, CTV has, since 2008, been owned by the PRC-based Taiwanese businessman Tsai Eng-Meng (Pi, 2008). Tsai's ownership of the CTV and the station's pro-Chinese tendency in news production have caused the "anti-media-monopoly movement" in Taiwan (Rawnsley and Feng, 2014). The homology of politics and media was visible in the form of competition for media by the nationalist groups. The competition for media in the 1990s was about the foundation of new TV channels to counter the KMT's Old Three. In the 2000s, the Old Three's ownership was the major warfare. After this round of contest, TTV took a pro-independence stance, CTV has maintained a pro-Sino-centric and pro-unification stance, and CTS was integrated into public broadcasting group. In 2006 the CTS was included in the PTS group which was rebranded as the TBS (Taiwan Broadcasting System), but the CTS as the second station of the TBS receives no state funding and relies on advertisement (Lin, 2009, p.208). In the meantime, the TV regulation authority was transferred in 2006 from the Governmental Information Office (GIO) to the National Communications Commission (NCC) founded in early 2006.[43] The GIO was now in charge of public subsidy for TV and later was incorporated into the newly-founded Ministry of Culture in 2012.[44] Theoretically, when the old commercial media are losing direct income from selling advertisement, they would start to seek indirect advertisement, such as sponsorship and product placement. But this practice was not approved by the NCC in the 2000s decade, which perceived TV more as a public education and was opposed to the intervention of advertisement into TV programming.[45] Consequently the TV

[42] On 9 December 2003, the Taiwanese government passed the amendments to the Radio and Television Act, the Cable Radio and Television Act and the Satellite Broadcasting Act. The amendments banned the government and political parties from involvement (investing) in private radio and TV stations. Within two years of the new rules taking effect, shares of the government and political parties must be sold (Lu, 2003).

[43] Available at: http://old.npf.org.tw/PUBLICATION/EC/093/EC-R-093-007.htm [Accessed 31 March 2016].

[44] Available at: http://mol.mcu.edu.tw/data/1337232081.pdf [Accessed 31 March 2016].

[45] The NCC lifted the ban in the October of 2012 because the industry kept complaining about the lack of domestic funding. Since then, commercial sponsors have started to test the economic value of direct programme sponsorship in Taiwanese TV (Hsu, 2012; C.-T. Lin, 2012; National Communications Commission, 2012; Peng, 2012). This regulation is available on NCC's website at: http://www.ncc.gov.tw/chinese/print.aspx?table_name=law&site_content_sn=257&sn_f=1964 [Accessed 31 March 2016].

stations took more low-cost strategy by further outsourcing to external companies and relying on foreign imports (S.-H. Lo, 2014).

The above-mentioned political economic contexts of the idol drama industry imply that TV drama was confronted with a tug of war between political, economic and social forces in the 2000s. Increasingly technological factors became important: many national TV companies were switching to high definition broadcasting and the Taiwanese export-oriented drama productions had also to upgrade to high definition format for its overseas circulation (Chu, 2012).[46] This meant that the production costs were also increasing. To give short-term financial support, in 2003 the GIO began to partially subsidise TV dramas, which was contested by and did not go to every application, only a few being granted money; a number of idol dramas started receiving subsidies (Lin, 2003; Tinallll, 2011). The amount of the subsidy could only occupy up to 50% of the production budget.[47] It meant that the government still hoped that the TV dramas would be market-oriented and exportable.

### 4.2.1 Responding to the Korean Wave

The overseas market of Taiwan's idol dramas is composed broadly of two sets of sub-regional markets: South East Asian and North East Asian markets (Chiu, 2009; 2012; S3, personal communication, Jan 25, 2013, p.2). The foreign funding bodies are from the distributors of three specific places: South East Asia (including Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, etc., where there are ethnic Chinese communities and other East Asian cultures influenced by ethnic Chinese culture), Japan, and PRC, which respectively bear changing economic significance for idol drama in a different time period (S3, personal communication, Jan 25, 2013, p.2; B1, personal communication, Jan 31, 2013, pp.5-6). Certainly, the funders mainly took note of companies that had gained success. The receiving countries' buyers started to be interested in the idol dramas from Taiwan (Chu, 2007a; Mao, 2010; C.-W. Wu, 2012). Since 2001, the idol drama companies

[46] During a public forum, director Chu Yu-Ning (2012) commented that his idol dramas had been produced in high definition format for foreign marketing.

[47] According to the regulations during 2008 and 2015, which I collected from the websites of GIO and Ministry of Culture, applicants for the subsidy must be terrestrial TV stations, satellite TV stations and TV drama production companies registered in Taiwan. Public-funded TV stations (the TBS entities) are not allowed to apply. The subsidised TV dramas should present Taiwanese culture and society creatively. They also should address audience tastes, employ new talents, have the capability of integrating with other media platforms and have overseas marketability. The subsidy should not exceed 49% of the reported production cost for every subsidised drama. Previous call for applications in the year of 2015 is available at http://www.moc.gov.tw/information_250_34208.html [Accessed 4 August 2016].

could raise overseas funds for their next projects. The overseas market is important especially for production projects which do not want to be tied by the scale of domestic budgets (Chiu, 2009; 2012; Lan, 2009).[48] But the Taiwanese idol drama companies are still in the middle of the popularity hierarchy in the region. When they pursue foreign funding, they are usually requested by their funders to incorporate "winning" elements and usually keep remediating regionally popular themes/elements (Mao, 2010; S1 and S2, personal communication, Feb 4, 2013, p.6).[49] Therefore, there are two main forms of their inter-Asian production relationships: first, referencing/remediating and, second, incorporating elements from funding countries. In the past, they only borrowed (paid or unpaid) from the "superior"– to emulate the more advanced media elements from Japan and South Korea. But now they not only reference the "superior" but also incorporate elements of the "inferior" – the funding market's elements from South East Asia and the PRC – and integrate the two into one unity of difference, or one hierarchical structure (Chu, 2010a; 2011b; Huang, 2010; Hung, 2010a; 2016; Mao, 2010; S3, personal communication, Jan 25, 2013, p.24). In short, the idol dramas were having more inter-Asian fusions.

While the Taiwanese TV industry is getting into deeper crises, the South Korean TV drama industry has been enjoying a remarkable export success in the region and the success has been called the "Korean Wave" (Lee, 2008, pp.189-190). Since the mid-2000s, South Korean TV drama has replaced Japanese TV drama to become the trendsetter, in terms of social values, femininity and masculinity as well as aesthetics, among working-class and middle-class female audiences, and the most in-demand products in the regional market (Yang, 2008b). South Korea has overtaken Japanese influence even on teenagers since the mid-2000s and has become a new phenomenal cultural trendsetter in East Asia (Kim, 2013).

The dividing line between Japanese and South Korean domination was in 2005, according to Nissim Otmazgin (2014).[50] It took a few years for South Korean drama to become highly in

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[48] For instance, seventy percent of the export-oriented satellite network GTV's profit comes from sales of dramas in overseas markets (B3, personal communication, Feb 26, 2013, p.14). The foreign market might be even more financially important than the domestic market, accounting for a larger proportion of total sales.

[49] During a public forum on the work of contemporary Taiwanese idol drama scriptwriting, Taiwanese scriptwriter Sharon Mao (2010) discussed a project for a TV drama, funded by a PRC production company, where the lead producer asked her to emulate *Tokyo Love Story* (1991), a successful Japanese TV drama in the early 1990s (for details of the Japanese TV drama, see Iwabuchi, 2004a). In chapter 5, I will discuss how scriptwriters S1 and S2 were requested, by producer Angie Chai, to emulate a South Korean TV drama when writing a piece for a Taiwanese-PRC co-produced TV drama (S1 and S2, personal communication, Feb 4, 2013, p.6).

[50] Japanese media had the most popularity and influence during the period between the 1990s and 2005 in East Asian markets (including Taiwan) (Otmazgin, 2014, p.323). The success of Taiwanese TV adaptations was also a part of Japanese success. But its foreign influence was in general fading at the end of the 2000s and early 2010s. Since the

demand. South Korean drama exporters have used several marketing strategies, especially "product bundling". Initially they sold TV dramas cheaply on the regional market and, when the dramas became popular, they bundled one popular drama with several commercially mediocre ones into one combined product for sale to increase sales and income (S1, personal communication, Feb 4, 2013, pp.17-18). This strategy depended on the capability of the South Korean TV industry to keep making successful TV dramas in the region. Ying Zhu (2008, p.91) argues that South Korean TV dramas are hugely successful in mainland China because their Confucian characteristic matches the contemporary political and cultural context of the PRC. The existing research shows that East Asian female audiences identify themselves with the more Confucian characteristics in South Korean TV dramas than Japanese TV dramas (Lin and Tong, 2008, p.103). JungBong Choi (2010) suggests that this tendency towards a more conservative template of modernisation is the reason that South Korean media and TV dramas replaced the Japanese contemporaries to become the most important reference for the majority of female audiences in the region.

South Korean TV dramas and Taiwanese idol dramas have competed in many East Asian markets, such as the PRC, since the 2000s (Zhu, 2008, pp.90-91). The Korean Wave first came to the PRC in the late 1990s before spreading elsewhere. The South Korean actors were soon invited to act in the PRC TV dramas since the late 1990s. Their South Korean cultural background has usually had no significance in their characterisations as the PRC TV industry has only utilised their personae constructed in the South Korean dramas and cast them to play ethnically Chinese characters. Although Taiwanese TV drama making has treated South Korean TV as the primary competitor in the same genre and target market, it could not rival its South Korean counterpart. Thus, the Taiwanese drama makers have tried to take advantage of the South Korean drama's popularity by emulating its subject-matter, story formulas and popular elements in order to attract those markets whose tastes have been shaped much by the South Korean products.

Taiwanese TV industry has had little production interaction with South Korean TV stations – the core of South Korean TV production system – except purchase. The South Korean TV system has four free-to-view national TV networks, Educational Broadcasting System (EBS), Korean

middle of the 2000s decade, the dominant position of the Japanese media in Taiwanese (and broadly East Asian) consumption has been offset by other rising media industries, especially the South Korean industries.

Broadcasting System (KBS), Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) and Seoul Broadcasting System (SBS). Power Generation Entertainment run by Virginia Liu produced the TV drama *Scent of Love* in 2003 as one of its *Asian trilogy* and tried to interest KBS in co-productions and other forms of collaboration, albeit with little success. Meanwhile, South Korean companies have had more interest in co-producing with the PRC, as proved in the example of *Beijing My Love* (2004), a KBS co-production with the PRC's China Central TV station (CCTV).[51] MBC co-produced with CCTV *A Modern Family* (2002) (Song, 2015). The regional popularity of South Korean TV dramas seemingly is driving South Korean independent production companies to raise foreign money for funding (Lee, 2008, p.193). GTV (Gala Television Station), a satellite TV channel that has imported many South Korean TV dramas, pre-purchased/invested in the South Korean TV drama *Full House* (2004) (Wu, 2004).

South Korean talent agencies have been actively cashing in on the Korean Wave impact by sending their talents to perform in the media of non-Korean markets. The South Korean talent export to the Taiwanese media has been one dimension of its expansion in the Chinese-speaking market composed mainly of the PRC, Hong Kong and Taiwan.[52] Taiwanese producers have employed South Korean actors roughly since 2003. Many of them assigned the South Korean actors ethnically Chinese characters.[53] A number of the idol dramas have emphasised the South Korean background of the actors (I will analyse them in chapter 6.3). For instance, *Silence* (2006), produced by Angie Chai, cast actress Park Eun-Hye to play a Korean-Taiwanese heroine (Chen, 2005b). Also, several young South Korean actors, such as Park Shin Hye, Choi Si Won, and Gu Hye Seon, lead the cast in the live-action TV adaptations of Japanese mangas of Jerry Feng and GTV, *My Combat Butler* (2011), *Extravagant Challenge* (2011) and *My Perfect Boyfriend* (2012) respectively (P.-C. Chu, 2011a).

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[51] Available at: http://twkor.com/hanju/885.html [Accessed 21 May 2016].

[52] The South Korean talent agencies have encouraged South Korean talents to work overseas by charging less from the overseas revenue of the talents. The overseas performance fee is much higher than that of their South Korean domestic performances. The ratio difference was revealed in the news about South Korean pop artist Park Jung-Min's contract with CNR Media. The news indicated that the artist-agency proportion was 2:8 for South Korean profit and 5:5 for overseas profit (Available at: http://www.diodeo.com/news/view/83228 [Accessed 8 September 2015]).

[53] These cases include *Hi My Dear* (2003), *Amor de Tarapaca* (2004), *Love at Aegean Sea* (2004) and *Stealing Heart* (2005).

### 4.2.2 Incorporating Elements from Funding Markets

The second practice of idol drama is to input the funding markets' elements from South East Asia and the PRC. The South East Asian markets, formed from Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia and other South East Asian markets, have been an established market for Chinese-language media, including Taiwanese products, for a long time since the Hong Kong film industry cultivated market tastes in the markets. The Chinese-language products have spread widely in the South East Asia but their market revenue mainly comes from several other countries: Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand as well as Hong Kong, in which Chinese-language programmes are regularly aired on dedicated TV channels.[54] Meanwhile, the Indonesian market has been reported by Taiwanese newspapers as the most difficult national market for the Chinese-language TV programmes without in-depth investigation (Chu, 2007a).

In the initial four years, idol dramas enjoyed a certain degree of interest from the East Asian markets mainly because of the halo effect of *Meteor Garden*.[55] South East Asia has remained an important market for idol dramas to cater for. Taiwanese drama makers have pre-sold idol dramas to the market.[56] For instance, GTV has been pre-selling TV dramas since the mid-2000s decade (B2, personal communication, Feb 26, 2013, p.4). *My Combat Butler* (2011) by GTV and Jerry Feng mentioned previously is partially pre-funded by Hong Kong distributor Medialink Entertainment Ltd (B2, personal communication, Feb 26, 2013, p.10). The funding relations between the market and idol drama generated a number of works that cast South East Asian actresses. For example, the *Meteor Garden* generated a sequel which received funding from Taiwan, Singapore and many Southeast Asian distributors. Singapore-based actress, Michelle Saram, AKA Zheng Xue-Er, played a leading role alongside the Taiwan-based actors in the sequel (EP2, personal communication, Feb 23, 2013, p.4). Later, *Meteor Garden* director Tsai Yueh-Hsun's *White Tower* (2006) also cast an Indonesia-based actress, Agnes Monica, to play a small role (S3, personal communication, Jan 25, 2013, p.24). South East Asia, such as Singapore

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[54] Malaysian Astro TV and Singaporean Media Corp have been stable purchasers of these non-domestic East Asian dramas. For information, see their websites at http://zhongwen.astro.com.my/Channels/SHX.aspx and http://www.channel8news.sg/ or http://tv.toggle.sg/en/channelu.

[55] Virginia Liu told me that "the environment was not bad in the beginning three and four years. But gradually since 2009 the whole production environment has completely changed. Besides, the Taiwanese TV drama industry has not created another benchmark success [in East Asia]" (P1, personal communication, March 26, 2013, p.9).

[56] Pre-selling is a common media business practice because it helps reduce a project's financial risk and includes a larger market base. The incoming payment can go directly into the production project to ease the financial burden. International pre-selling has been commonly used by project-based film and TV producers who do not have enough in-house capital and market, and rely on overseas markets, for instance the Hong Kong film industry (Lii, 1998).

and Thailand, has encouraged Taiwanese media to use its tourist spots as drama locations for promotion of its local tourist business via the regionally circulating media content (S1, personal communication, Feb 4, 2013, p.15). For instance, idol drama *Letter 1949* (2009) and *In Time with You* (2011) shot a few scenes in Thailand (Phuket Island) and Singapore respectively.

South East Asian money has been gradually decreasing for Taiwanese idol dramas. By contrast, PRC and Japanese markets are much more affluent and quickly rising. The trend is shown in the change of GTV drama's overseas market show fee per episode between the early 2000s and early 2010s (see Table 4-1). Thus the idol drama industry has put more effort into expanding into the more affluent and high-growth PRC and Japanese markets.

Table 4-1 GTV dramas' overseas market show fee per episode (in US dollar)

| | Early 2000s | Early 2010s |
|---|---|---|
| South East Asia | Up to US$25,000 (£19,034) | US$10,000-15,000 (£7,600-11,420) |
| The PRC | US$10,000 (£7,600) | US$20,000-30,000 (£15,228-22,841) |
| Japan | NA | Up to US$50,000-60,000 (£38,069-45,683) |

Source: B1 (personal communication, Jan 31, 2013, pp.5-6)
Idol dramas have been traded in US dollar in the regional market. Thus the amount is represented in US dollar to capture the industrial convention.[57]

PRC TV is a new and important funding source because of its rising domestic advertisement market and hence TV production budget. The PRC with the population of more than one billion people opened itself to non-PRC capital and business in the early 1980s (Hung, 2009). In the twenty-first century, it has topped the Japanese economy to become the second largest national economy in the world, following the US economy, and its urban areas have accumulated much fortune on average (Monahan, 2010). The PRC not only keeps functioning as an important export-oriented manufacturing base for the world, but also has a booming domestic consumer market (Canton, 2015). Advertising has become an important business tool in the PRC's market economy. Alongside this general trend, the PRC media market has been increasing at a surprising

[57] The figures in US dollar are converted to British Pounds at the exchange rate of 1 US dollar to 0.76 British Pounds, as in August 2016.

rate. Market researches indicate that Chinese TV advertisement revenue has increased by more than 10% annually from 2012 to 2013 (Szalai, 2012) and, according to a US report, by 2020 the Chinese film market will replace the US market to become the largest in the world (Ernst & Young, 2012 cited in Tsui, 2012). The drastically rising TV and media advertising revenue has helped the TV stations to increase their programming budget. According to Deloitte China Research and Insight Centre (2013, pp.10-20), PRC film and TV drama entertainment markets are steadily rising as opposed to fragmented Taiwanese film and TV drama entertainment markets. The sales of TV dramas overall rose from 5.2billion Yuan (around £0.52 billion at the exchange rate of one Chinese Yuan to 0.1 British Pounds) in 2008 to 9.8billion Yuan (around £0.98 billion) in 2012; consequently, TV drama's production expense increased when the revenue increased (Ibid, pp.11-12). Online video platforms, such as Youku, Tudou, iQIYI and LeTV, are also the main platforms for TV dramas in PRC. Their purchase for the online show rights of TV dramas increased from only thousand Yuan to 600,000 Yuan per episode (Ibid, p.12). Gradually they also produce online dramas themselves. By contrast, Taiwanese TV production companies suffer from the lack of funding due to the over fragmentation. These Taiwanese TV workers are drawn to the PRC TV companies and even film making that target PRC markets (Ibid, p.17).

The PRC TV system since the 2000s is mainly formed of a central national TV network – China Central TV – and more than twenty provincial networks. All these networks have their nation-wide satellite channels, such as Hunan Satellite TV channel, Dragon Satellite TV channel, Anhui Satellite TV channel, etc. (S.-H. Lo, 2014). These networks are the central broadcasting platforms for TV dramas in the 2000s decade. The PRC TV is tightly controlled by its government, which sees TV as an important ideological tool (Ng, 2015). Nonetheless, to increase its own competitive edge, co-production has been an important way for the PRC TV to upgrade itself. Since the 1980s, the PRC state has planned to improve its domestic programming by selective imports and co-productions (Lai, 2008; 2011; S.-C. Cheng, 2010).[58] In co-productions, non-PRC partners receive the PRC production funding whilst the PRC side learns foreign know-how (Meng, 2007; Pan, 2008; S.-C. Cheng, 2010; Huang, 2010; Liang, 2010; Lai, 2011; Keane and Liu, 2013;

[58] TV dramas are regulated in three categories in the PRC: imports, co-productions and domestic productions. Import refers to the TV drama produced by a foreign enterprise. Co-production refers to the TV drama that is made by at least one foreign enterprise and one PRC company. In terms of elements (actors, shooting scenes, behind-the-scene staff), it should have a minimal third or half of PRC elements – the proportion changes from time to time. Domestic production is made by PRC enterprise. It can only have up to 5 external actors and non-acting workers. The regulations are to protect local business and professionals (Lai, 2008, pp.1-5, p.58).

Hsiao, 2014; Li, 2014, p.6). Since then, the market-driven PRC TV production system has been learning a great deal from foreign TV industries, including the Taiwanese TV industry.

Although Japanese TV dramas ignited some sparks in the 1990s in the PRC, South Korean TV dramas made the first nation-wide consumption in the PRC in the late 1990s. Around that time, the foreign urban youth-centred dramas set against a materially wealthy backdrop met the demands of the middle-class women in urban PRC. Taiwanese idol dramas have been popular in the PRC TV market but in general, South Korean dramas are more heavily consumed by Chinese audiences (Zhu, 2008, pp.90-91). F4 was one of the most popular idol stars in PRC for a few years after *Meteor Garden* was circulated underground in 2002.

Although the underground circulation has been a quick way to fame and popularity, an industrial producer needs official circulation for an immediate financial cash return. The Taiwanese idol drama industry has sought to take advantage of the PRC's affluent market in many ways. Numerous Taiwanese TV companies have co-produced with the PRC since the late 1980s (Lai, 2011). In the idol drama era, Angie Chai was the first staff member from *Meteor Garden* to launch co-productions with the PRC (W.-J. Yeh, 2007). Commonly framed as the "birth mother" of Taiwanese idol drama, or a "sorceress" who has the magic to create popular TV serial dramas, Chai became a star producer and attracted co-operating invitations from the PRC and Hong Kong (W.-J. Yeh, 2007; Pan, 2008; Huang, 2010; Liang, 2010). Compared to Chai, Jerry Feng and Tsai Yueh-Hsun's interactions with the PRC have been fewer and later and I will discuss this in chapter 5. Chai's first PRC-funded TV drama, *City of Sky*, was produced in 2004 under the funding from the China Central TV, starring Taiwanese and PRC actors. In 2005, Chai packaged an inter-Asian cast in her TV drama *Silence* (2006), starring Taiwanese, Hong Kong, South Korean and PRC actors. *Corner with Love* (2007) produced and scripted by her, was her third co-production with a PRC TV company. *Sweet Relationship* (2007) and *Calling for Love* (2009) were also co-productions at different levels between her company and PRC companies (EP2, personal communication, Feb 23, 2013, pp.5-8).

As Taiwanese domestic market revenue has been sliding and the PRC market has risen with a consistent annual growth rate, more Taiwanese media talents and professionals have flowed to the PRC TV system instead of staying in Taiwan (Chu, 2006; Huang, 2010; Chang, 2011, pp.50-52; Kung and Hsu, 2012; Ma, 2016). According to Taiwanese news coverage, in 2014 a PRC-funded TV drama could have on average a budget of NT$5 million (£100,000) per

70-min episode (Hsiao, 2014), much higher than the average Taiwanese funding. Many PRC TV stations started employing Taiwanese idol drama workers for their own idol dramas (Pan, 2008; Huang, 2010; Liang, 2010; Mao, 2010; Chien, 2011; *China News*, 2012; Kung and Hsu, 2012; *Shenzhen Business News*, 2012; Chai, 2015 cited in Golden Bell Awards, 2015a). For instance, in 2009, the PRC's Hunan Broadcasting System and its affiliated production company produced and aired its own TV adaptation of the Japanese manga *Boys Over Flowers*. The TV adaptation's director Shen Yi comes from Taiwan (Z. Wang, 2009). The PRC's Anhui Broadcasting System employed a Taiwanese team and cast to release its idol drama *Happy & Love Forever* (2010) and *Sunny Happiness* (2011), which were penned by one of the scriptwriters I interviewed.

Other Taiwan-based TV drama producers also have sought PRC funding in the 2010s (Wu and Jiang, 2010b; Chien, 2011). *Fathers' War* (2011) was a co-production between the PRC's Shenzhen Broadcasting System and the Taiwanese independent company Chun Long International Entertainment Co (*Sina Entertainment*, 2011; Y.-L. Wang, 2011a; *Citizen Weekly*, 2012). GTV co-produced one TV drama, *When Love Walked In* (2012), tailored for PRC TV, that employed PRC-born Korean Wave idols (Zhou Mi from Super Junior M and Song Qian from F(x) who are represented by South Korea's SM talent agency) and Taiwanese idol star Calvin Chen of Fahrenheit in 2012 (Chen, 2012; Tu, 2014). Jerry Feng's Comic International also co-produced *Sunny Girl* (2011), which was a remake of the popular South Korean TV drama *Bright Girl's Success* (2002) with a PRC-based Shanghai Yiaoxingying Media Company in 2010 (P.-C. Chu, 2011b). The PRC-Taiwanese co-productions have usually employed South Korean elements alongside less attractive Taiwanese elements because these projects have wished to capitalise on the surplus value of the Korean Wave (P.-C. Chu, 2011b; Chen, 2012). These "co-productions" have been more like the outsourcing of PRC TV for programmes from Taiwan-based production companies.

### 4.2.3 Entering Japan and More Remediation

Idol drama's third pattern of inter-Asian packaging is to further remediate Japanese elements. The Japanese media market, in a country of more than 100 million nationals, is abundantly profitable and stable, for it has not had the problem of serious piracy and has been oligopolised

by six Japanese media conglomerates called “major six”.[59] Besides, post-war Japan has been known for its closed cultural boundary between itself and foreigners, particularly East Asians. Japan has not had quota control of foreign imports but its TV has been self-sufficient since the 1970s (Iwabuchi, 2002, p.212). In terms of sources of import, Japan has mainly accepted Western media and imported fewer East Asian content (Iwabuchi, 2002, p.212).

The major six networks have their own associated broadcasting satellite (BS) channels and local sub-stations (local channels). Since the 2000s, the local TV stations and nation-wide BS channels have been expanding and have demanded alternative materials. Previously re-airing the domestic programmes produced from the major TV networks, they began to air non-Japanese East Asian TV dramas in the 2000s. Also, Japanese public TV, NHK, is responsible for airing “quality foreign content” for international cultural exchange (Kawamura, 2011). They chose South Korean TV drama and have witnessed its phenomenal impact on Japanese TV since 2003.[60] South Korean TV dramas constructed the market segmentation for “Asian drama”. Seeking alternatives outside South Korean TV dramas, Japanese TV drama traders found the Taiwanese idol dramas, particularly Taiwanese adaptations of Japanese manga (Liu, 2006; Y.-Y. Li, 2007; Kawamura, 2011). At the end of 2003, *Meteor Garden* was introduced to the Japanese BS and DVD markets. Since then, the Taiwanese idol dramas have attempted to expand in Japan.[61]

The most successful idol dramas in Japan have come from companies that began their careers by adapting Japanese manga, especially *Meteor Garden*. Although many idol dramas have been sold cheaply to Japan, only three production groups have had more visible success there: Angie Chai, Jerry Feng (who has teamed up with GTV since 2005) and Tsai Yueh-Hsun from the *Meteor Garden* crew. TV adaptations of Japanese manga have guaranteed at least

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[59] The six Japanese nation-wide TV networks are Japan Broadcasting Corporation, aka Nippon Hoso Kyokai (NHK), Nippon Television Network System (NNS), Japan News Network (JNN), Fuji Television System (FTS), All-Nippon News Network (ANN) and TV Tokyo Network (TXN).

[60] There have been many academic researches on the Japanese success of South Korean TV dramas (Honda, 2006; Chua and Iwabuchi, 2008). In short, the poignant and tragic South Korean TV love stories, mainly providing fantastic escapes, are very different from the highly realistic and socially engaging Japanese TV dramas developed since the 1990s. Thus older Japanese women treat the handsome, tall and strong South Korean actors, who manifest a very different masculinity from many Japanese male actors, as ideal lovers. The first and most phenomenal South Korean TV drama was *Winter Sonata*, which was aired from April to September 2003 on the NHKBS2 channel and then released on DVD. It was a phenomenal success among Japanese women. After that, the six major networks started to occasionally air South Korean dramas on their main channels in 2004. Some even exceptionally created a special time slot for South Korean dramas. Although the local channels and satellite channels have been the major broadcasters of non-Japanese contents, DVDs have been a really important way of circulation in Japan for foreign dramas as the target audience can buy DVDs and watch them any time including at home (Kawanura, 2011).

[61] Japanese press has coined the dramas centred on *Meteor Garden*, F4 and other idol dramas from Taiwan as “Tai-phoon”, “Taiwanese Wave” or “Chinese-language Wave”. These labels hint at South Korean media culture forerunning Taiwanese media culture in the Japanese market (Liu, 2006; Y.-Y. Li, 2007, p.3; Chi 2008; Kawamura, 2011; Chou, 2012).

certain visibility in the Japanese market. Chai and Feng have kept producing and promoting adaptations of mangas, starring F4 and other Taiwanese idols such as Fahrenheit, to expand into the Japanese market (*Sina Entertainment*, 2015). For Tsai, entering the Japanese market was a benchmark for higher economic return. As a much established system, Japanese TV broadcasting has had high standards of narration, technological and production quality and has been setting the technological benchmark for East Asian media business, in particular Taiwanese TV. In the 2000s, Tsai was benchmarking his production capability against Japanese criteria (Tung, 2007; Lan, 2009). To enter Japan and receive pre-purchase funding, Tsai cast members of F4 and chose elements familiar to Japanese market dealers and consumers. For example, after *Meteor Garden*, Tsai produced a Taiwanese version of the Japanese best-selling TV drama, *White Tower* – which also received a level of recognition in Japan.[62] *White Tower* was a great success in Japan by Taiwanese standards (Chu, 2007c; Y.-H. Yeh, 2007; P1, personal communication, March 26, 2013, p.22).[63] By the same logic, Tsai also took advantage of the Japanese market when he produced his police action genre *Black and White* (2009), which cast F4 member Vic Chou and sold its distribution rights in Japan (Lan, 2009).

The Japanese consumption of idol dramas has also seen adaptations of manga, romantic comedies and idol stars, especially F4. Women in their thirties, younger than the audience groups for South Korean dramas, have been the main consumers (Kawamura, 2011). They have been attracted to the TV adaptations because they are familiar with the original manga. Also, the TV adaptations are teen-centred romantic comedies, attracting the audiences who are tired of serious Japanese dramas. There have been a few Taiwanese idol stars who have garnered a certain amount of fandom in Japan, particularly F4 and Fahrenheit. But the Taiwanese stars were never as prominent as A-list South Korean stars in the Japanese market (Y.-Y. Li, 2007, p.7; Kawamura, 2011). The 30-year-old Japanese fans have been attracted to the less complicated, less modern, pristine, softer, tender and gentle personalities of the Taiwanese stars. The pleasure of TV drama consumption has been embedded in the cultural hierarchy between Japan and Taiwan (Chou,

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[62] Tsai's *White Tower* (2006) claimed it received the highest distribution fee ever from a Japanese dealer at US$33,000 per episode in 2007. Although it was not an adaptation of manga, it had many elements that the Japanese dealer preferred, including the star casting of Jerry Yan (F4) and its inter-textual allusion to the Japanese same-name hit drama *White Tower* (2003) (Y.-H. Yeh, 2007).

[63] The success of the *White Tower* in Japan is defined in terms of its profit. Its distribution fee for the Japanese market was US$33,000 per episode (Chu, 2007c; Y.-H. Yeh, 2007; P1, personal communication, March 26, 2013, p.22). Virginia Liu believed that this figure is the highest among Taiwanese idol dramas ever sold to the market (P1, personal communication, March 26, 2013, p.22).

2012, pp.67-74). In summary, in both demographics and dramatic genres, in a narrow sense, the light comedy of idol dramas differs significantly from the tragic genres of South Korean dramas.

The Taiwanese heyday in Japan took place between 2005 and 2007. According to the study of Yi-Yun Li (2007, p.5), idol drama from Taiwan almost formed a large phenomenon in 2005 and 2006. Kawamura (2011) believes that 2006 was the best year of Taiwanese idol drama in Japan. In October 2007, Tsai Yueh-Hsun's *White Tower* was aired on NHK's BS channel, reaching the Japanese climax of idol drama (Chu, 2007c). After that, even F4's bankability quickly decreased. But although their popularity decreased, the Japanese tourist business became interested in co-operating with idol dramas.[64] The idol drama industry began to shoot in Japanese cities, such as *Honey and Clover* (2008), *Alice in Wonder City* (2012) (Chi, 2011; CTS, 2012; S3, personal communication, Jan 25, 2013, pp.20-21).[65]

The interaction mainly involved trading programmes and intellectual property between Taiwanese and Japanese media in the 1990s and 2000s. The trades have been asymmetric with Japanese export to Taiwan more than the other way round. The Taiwanese consumptions of Japanese media culture (even including multiple ways of adaptation) were mainly one-dimensional. Production interaction between Japanese and Taiwanese TV hardly existed. Idol drama *Mars* (2004), co-produced by Chai and Tsai, employed Japanese production technicians and shot some scenes in Japan (EP2, personal communication, Feb 23, 2013, p.3). This was one of the rare technical interactions during the 2000s decade.

Japan did not change its attitude towards Taiwan when its media culture was actively embraced by the new Taiwanese generation in the 1990s and even 2000s. In the 1990s, some Japanese media companies tried to expand the overseas market when they were aware of their popularity, but the Japanese collective perception towards East Asia influenced its East Asian strategy. Koichi Iwabuchi (2002, p.11) argues that the Japanese media business in general had a "condescending" attitude towards Taiwan and many East Asian areas. After a few setbacks in co-operation (Ibid, p.109), its major foreign business returned to exports. Japanese entertainment

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[64] A local TV station in Ehime Prefecture reported the Japanese filming of *Alice in Wonder City*. This news indicates that the Japanese local society was interested in taking advantage of the influence of Taiwanese idol drama in East Asia for the promotion of tourist spots in the prefecture. The news clip is available at http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XMzk4ODkxMTY4.html [Accessed 19 August 2016].

[65] A number of scenes in *Honey and Clover* and *Alice in Wonder City* were filmed in Japan's Kagawa Prefecture and Matsuyama City, Ehime Prefecture, respectively (Chi, 2011; CTS, 2012). The two prefectures are in Shikoku Island, Japan.

programmes also had a number of satellite channels by the late 1990s on Taiwanese cable TV. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, Japanese TV made a profit from the Taiwanese market by providing TV programmes to TV channels that specialised in broadcasting programmes relating to aspects of Japanese culture: Videoland Japan Channel, Bo-Shin Japan Channel, Gold-Sun TV Channel and JET (Ibid, pp.139-141). JET (Japanese Entertainment Television) was founded by Sumitomo Trading Co., Ltd. in partnership with TBS (Tokyo Broadcasting System), the key nation-wide TV station of JNN, in 1997 (Ibid, p.123). It was headquartered in Singapore and covered Taiwan, Hong Kong, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines (Ibid).

This relationship slightly changed in the 2010s. In the 2010s, this export mode via regional satellite TV no longer worked well. JET ended airing Japanese TV programmes in 2010, which reportedly was due to its Japanese TV programmes being less popular than South Korean TV dramas and Taiwanese domestic dramas (M.-T. Cheng, 2010). Its end might also be because the Internet had replaced satellite TV to become the most important medium for young audiences, especially urban youngsters and university students – the most faithful overseas audience of Japanese TV dramas. They have mainly watched unauthorised fan translations of Japanese TV dramas on the Internet (Hu, 2005; 2012; 2014).

The Japanese media turned to Taiwan again also because of its uncertain political relations with the PRC during the 2000s decade (B2, personal communication, Feb 26, 2013, p.5; P1, personal communication, March 26, 2013, p.8; Shang, 2014a).[66] Between 2005 and 2010, Japanese political relations with the PRC worsened due to the escalation of the long-standing territorial dispute. Large-scale anti-Japanese protests, demonstrations and boycotts happened in the PRC in 2005, 2010 and 2012 (Cody, 2005; Ramzy, 2010; Johnson and Shanker, 2012). Compared to South Korean success in the PRC, Japanese media could not operate well in the PRC and turned to Taiwan (Shang, 2014a). Although the Taiwanese government also has had disputes among the islands with Japan, it has pragmatically encouraged economic and cultural interactions between Taiwan and Japan. Thus Taiwanese economic relation with Japan has been steady (Sahashi, 2014).

[66] Virginia Liu commented that the relationship between PRC and Japan has been bad so that Taiwanese TV drama companies interest Japanese companies which would seek co-operations with Taiwanese companies in the East Asian market expansion of the Japanese companies (P1, personal communication, March 26, 2013, p.8).

Japanese media sensed the fading of its foreign influence at the end of the 2000s and early 2010s, since when it has taken action in Taiwan actively. Japanese once again treated "Taiwan" as "a springboard to the PRC market" to increase Japanese competitive edge (Shang, 2014a). According to B2, Japanese companies have softened their attitudes towards Taiwan and been active in encouraging co-operations and even investing in idol drama (personal communication, Feb 26, 2013, p.3).

A few Japanese TV companies have established Taiwanese branches. Nippon Television Network Corporation (NTV), the key nation-wide TV station of NNS, co-founded CNplus Production Co., a Taiwan-based drama production company, with Taiwan-based Chung Tian Satellite TV Station (CTI). NTV's affiliated production company AX-ON and CNplus agreed to exchange production experience and co-produce TV programmes (Li, 2011). SPO Entertainment Co., a Japanese dealer of East Asian (mainly South Korean, Taiwanese and the PRC) TV dramas, co-founded with Taiwan-based Azio TV the Dafang Entertainment Production Co.[67] Dafang co-produced the idol drama *Fabulous Boy* in 2013 with Jerry Feng's Comic International.[68] At the programming level, Taiwanese GTV and Japanese Epoch Entertainment co-funded *Extravagant Challenge* in 2011, which was previously mentioned for its casting of South Korean idol stars (B1, personal communication, Jan 31, 2013, p.2). NHK co-produced a TV music show with Taiwan-based TVBS, featuring the Japanese pop singer Fukuyama Masaharu and Taiwanese pop singing band Mayday in 2014. The TVBS stated clearly that it tried to learn from Japan (Yu, 2014). Another nation-wide network, Fuji TV, alongside its sub-station Kansai TV, shot a four-episode TV drama *GTO Taiwan* with Comic International being its local producer and GTV being its Taiwanese broadcaster in early 2014.[69] Adaptation business continues. Jerry Feng produced *Gangster's Bakery* (2014) and Tsai Yueh-Hsun is adapting Japanese manga *Midnight Restaurant* for TV drama (P2, personal communication, Feb 20, 2013, pp.11-12; B2, personal communication, Feb 26, 2013, p.2; Hung, 2016).

Major Japanese talent agencies co-founded a talent agency, Creative Artist Japan (CAJ), which is headquartered in Japan and has two branches in Taiwan and the US. Its aim is to represent and promote Japanese artists, talents, actors, scriptwriters and directors, and art works

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[67] Available at: http://www.spoinc.jp/company/taiwan-rerease20121206.pdf [Accessed 19 February 2013].
[68] Available at: http://www.spoinc.jp/company/taiwan-rerease20121206.pdf [Accessed 19 February 2013].
[69] Available at: http://www.gtv.com.tw/News/20140312001/ [Accessed 1 April 2016].

to gain a place in the East Asian market.[70] Its most important act was to link Comic International and GTV's idol drama *Gangster's Bakery* (2014) with Japanese actress Nagasawa Masami so far.[71] Amuse Soft, a Japanese entertainment conglomerate with a talent management agency and a mass media content distribution business, is possibly one of the most active Japanese media companies expanding into overseas markets. Over the last few years, it has opened branches in South Korea, the PRC, Taiwan, etc. The Amuse Soft established the Amuse Taiwan in Taipei in May 2011.[72] Its activities in Taiwan have been highly visible, receiving media attention. The company says its rationale is to "enter the Chinese-speaking countries via Taiwan" and it has a vision of Taiwan as a bridge for Japan and the Chinese-speaking East Asia on its official website.[73] But its Taiwan Branch claims to not only promote Japanese artists in Taiwan, but also introduce Taiwanese mass media content back to Japan. Amuse Taiwan invested in the idol drama *You Light up My Star* (2014), which is analysed in chapter 6.3. It also introduced Taiwanese pop music band Mayday and TV drama writer and novelist Mag Hsu, to the Japanese market (Yang and Tu, 2013; Mei, 2015).

These talent agencies have changed the scene of Taiwanese-Japanese talent exchange. Taiwanese media has had a few Japanese performers who are not famous in Japan but want to seek an opportunity to perform in the Chinese-language media industry, for instance, Fujioka Dean and Tanaka Chie (Yeh, 2006; Yang, 2009c; Mei, 2016). They usually play Japanese characters in Taiwanese media products which highlight Taiwan's Japanese interaction.[74] Since the foundation of CAJ and the Amuse Taiwan branch, well-known Japanese actors have participated in Taiwanese idol dramas either as cameo or leading performers, including

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[70] Available at: http://www.caj-asia.com/ [Accessed 8 November 2014].

[71] Available at: http://www.caj-asia.com/work/ [Accessed 1 April 2016].

[72] Hatanaka Tatsuro, the president of Amuse Soft Entertainment, stated officially in June 2012 that it will be expanding into East Asia via the Taiwanese office. Available at: http://ir.amuse.co.jp/english/company/message.html [Accessed 14 March 2013].

[73] Ichige Rumiko, the president of Amuse Taiwan, has the following statement on the webpage of Amuse Taiwan: "The entertainment market in Asia is having a drastic transition…We are determined to step out of Japan and establish offices in Asian entertainment centres that are transnationally connected. Our object is to internationalise the spread and communication of our information. We have decided to set up a new company in Taiwan. On the condition that nowadays the populous Greater China region is more and more prosperous, we believe that Taiwan is our only choice in order to circulate our information to these populations. Amuse Taiwan will not only exchange both Taiwanese and Japanese excellent talents and art works, either from Japan to Taiwan or vice versa. We are also actively planning Taiwanese and Japanese co-productions for the Asian countries. Dedicated to the encounters and connections of people, we hope that Amuse Taiwan can become a bridge between Taiwan and Japan and prosper forever." Available at: http://www.amusetaiwan.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3&Itemid=8 [Accessed 28 February 2013].

[74] Fujioka Dean was a talent represented by Angie Chai and consequently appeared in Chai's idol drama works, such as *Corner with Love* (2007), *Miss No Good* (2008). Tanaka Chie was most known for her performance in film *Cape No. 7* (2008). She also played the female lead in Virginia Liu's idol drama work *Because of You* (2010). Their characters in the idol dramas have Japanese backgrounds (Yeh, 2006; Yang, 2009c; Mei, 2016).

Fukuyama Masaharu, Nagasawa Masami and Hiraoka Yuta respectively in *You Light up My Star* (2014), *Gangster's Bakery* (2014) and *Once Upon a Time in Beitou* (2014) (NTDTV, 2013; Li, 2014, p.6; Shang, 2014a). These dramas' production budgets could reach NT$4-5 million (£80,000-100,000) per 70-min episode (Hsiao, 2014, p.30; Li, 2014, p.6).

## 4.3 Conclusion

This chapter has traced the inter-Asian packaging of the new Taiwanese TV drama makers since 2001 until the present day. The development of idol drama and its practices are applicable to the theory of Raymond Williams (1982) reviewed in chapter 2. Symbolic creators are confined by the political economy (Taiwanese politics and regional geo-politics) and dominant conventions of their production environment (the domination of Japanese and South Korean TV dramas in the market and the ethnic Chinese cultural business route in the region) alongside their embedded consciousness (post-colonial engagement with Japan and production of media culture in standardised Chinese setting, etc.).

Those inter-Asian packagers have operated within a dynamical hierarchy of pop culture popularity in the regional market which has very much determined their practices. In general, the dynamic pecking order is constituted by media industries based in different East Asian countries and refers to their popular appeal in the female market of dramas. In the 1990s, the most popular TV dramas among women in their teens and twenties were from Japan. But later, since 2005, the South Korean media culture has topped the market demographics of many countries, attracting both young and middle-aged women in many East Asian countries. The Taiwan-based idol drama has been at the middle level of the pecking order. This post-Sino-centric Taiwanese industry of female TV dramas has occurred in a laissez-faire home market (in terms of free import) and has opportunistically taken advantage of East Asian regionalised taste for its survival. It has faced the domination of Japanese and South Korean media in its target market but has created its own market share.

The making of *Meteor Garden* was a perfect example of the pecking order dominated by the Japanese media. To attract domestic audiences, *Meteor Garden* adapted Japanese manga and emulated Japanese TV drama formats and the aesthetics of romantic genre and young good-looking idol talents, a formula that proved workable in the market. The production and consumption of idol drama have been highly connected to the liberalisation and globalised media

flow in East Asia. *Meteor Garden* and its descendants can be seen as an outcome of the Taiwanese post-KMT, deregulated and fragmented media market and increasingly regionalised media consumption. It targeted young Taiwanese women and teenage girls in globalised, post-Sino-centric and post-colonial Taiwan. As the Taiwanese media market was deregulated, domestic TV production took an export-oriented business model, relying on both domestic and foreign markets. The domestic and regional success of the idol drama signalled a competitive edge over the Taiwan TV industry.

In terms of subject-matter, *Meteor Garden* spoke to many East Asian young women by mediating a set of more conservative gender and class values that were slightly different from its Japanese original. The idol drama harvested its initial regional success from a regional market that in return became interested in the post-colonial "Japanised" and Mandarin modernity, masculinity and femininity of post-KMT Taiwan. In terms of its imaginary world view, Taiwanese drama makers constructed and displayed a post-colonial and post-Sino-centric Mandarin-speaking setting of urban Taiwan. Targeting young women, such hybridisation may be seen as an ambiguous response of female-focused media products towards Taiwanese nationalist politics. This is so, although idol drama showed no serious engagement with the hegemonic contestation between the political narratives of the KMT, the anti-KMT and even the CCP-PRC forces concerning Taiwan's political future.

This new celebrity-centred media genre has gradually been considered one of the best showcases for home-grown talents, consumer goods and tourist spots. It also became a new celebrity vehicle for Taiwanese media businesses. But the Taiwanese general public's recognition of this industry seems to be conditional, in my own observation of the media and governments' response to the idol drama. It seems that the industry must be helpful to domestic economy and function as a showcase for modern Taiwan. Nevertheless, in a similar way to the deregulated, globalised and regionalised post- (Sino-centric) national female consumption, this female-oriented drama industry has also experienced a similar laissez-faire process. The inter-Asian packaging of the new Taiwanese TV dramas can be seen as a chain reaction to the liberalisation of the market and consumer's choice. The industry has been free from state regulation, consequentially receiving little state protection (especially the control of foreign imports), apart from some opportunities, after 2003, to apply to win partial state subsidy. It can only survive by targeting the regionally shaped tastes of the female audiences of the regional market, including

Taiwan. It has walked onto a road that leads to opportunistic and more aggressive decentralised inter-Asian packaging and linkage with production materials and elements that will attract these audiences and benefit the industry.

The idol drama industry developed in highly competitive markets, situated in a turbulent Taiwanese society fraught with political contestations (and homologous media ownership transition and contestation), lacking domestic funding and industrial production experiences, and incubating only a small pool of talents. Hence a few Taiwanese independent TV production companies have resorted to overseas market funding and employed popular foreign elements and talents, and other production means, in this production system which is characterised by flexibility and low-cost innovation. As Taiwanese TV production conditions worsened, the companies relied on overseas funding, the domestic commercial market and limited state subsidy to target Taiwanese and overseas markets. Again, in the middle of the pecking order, the companies have kept remediating regionally popular themes/elements from Japan and South Korea and have started incorporating elements of funding markets from South East Asia and the PRC. These activities seem very sporadic and non-systematic, quickly reacting to regional dynamism, and lacking in critical reflection and long-term strategy, echoing the argument about the Taiwanese response to globalisation as having “little luxury to ponder” and little chance to “take time inventing strategies” and thus accompanying “jitters, shocks, excitements and after-effects” (Shih, 2003, p.147). The idol drama industry seems preoccupied with making a living and adapting to the changing domestic and regional market dynamics.

In the introduction chapter and this chapter, the homologous relation of politics and media in terms of the transition from one Sino-centrism to dual nationalist competition appeared visibly at the level of TV in the 1990s and 2000s. The competition for TV (the foundation of cable TV and the contest for the Old Three’s ownership) between two Taiwanese nationalist groups was made under the conscious acts of politicians and media businessmen from both the KMT and DPP groups. But we only saw the ambiguous response of female-oriented idol drama which at first took forms such as post-colonial engagement with Japan in a standardised generic Chinese-speaking setting, and, then, co-operations with media enterprises from particular countries. Idol drama is certainly not identical with politics but it is still tied by the political economy of Taiwan. Its inter-Asian connections with South East Asia, the PRC and Japan, did not go beyond conventional Taiwanese political relations and economic trade routes. In the framework of critical

approach to the relation of mass media and its society introduced in chapter 2, mass media conforms to and articulates dominant forces, maintaining the hegemony of dominant value systems and neglecting subordinated and marginal ones in terms of nation, class and gender. In the age of globalisation in East Asia, the mass media market is in an integration process which would more influentially be shaped by the value systems and media aesthetics of stronger and larger countries. This homogenisation not only takes place in consumption, but also subsequently in production. As a result, the media consumption and production of Taiwan that operates in a laissez-faire market is strongly influenced by larger external forces. The idol drama industry, which has never had a dominating status in the regional market, has had to submit to the funding markets' wishes and demands. Some productions have become, again, conventional, and have sought safe dramas.

# Chapter 5 Strategies, Constraints and Politics

Chapter 4 argues that the inter-Asian packaging of idol drama is a new business model for the new generation of Taiwanese TV drama makers to build careers in the domestic and regional commercial female-oriented TV drama market dominated mainly by other East Asian (South Korean and Japanese) and also Hollywood media culture. This chapter examines the strategies of the TV drama producers in their inter-Asian packaging with an attention on the contestations and negotiations surrounding their work and how they strive for legitimacy in their industry.

A question should be asked here: what is the main purpose of the idol drama industry? People in the industry would tell us that it ideally wants both commercial success and critical acclaim. Admittedly, professional reputation, prestige, production know-how and other skills (cultural capital and symbolic capital) are crucial, but these accumulations can never be done without the long-term accumulation and investment of economic capital. Apparently, the commercial success matters more than critical recognition and the packagers in the industry achieve this goal with their own strategies.

In the Taiwanese TV market characterised by market liberalisation, fragmentation and recession, one of the safest ways to make money has been low-cost "commercial localism" – satisfying the domestic market with low-cost production. In the idol drama sector, this production strategy has been most successfully practised by Sanlih Entertainment Television Company (SET). Briefly mentioned in chapter 1.3.2, the SET is a domestic TV station that owns four satellite TV channels (SET-Taiwan, SET-Metro, SET-News, SET-International) and it is owned by a pro-independence Taiwanese businessman Lin Kung-Hai who has a clear political stance (Chen, Yi and Kao, 2012). Since the end of 2001, when its first idol drama *Lavender* (2001) was aired on TTV, SET-Metro has produced idol dramas and sold them to the Old Three. As a TV station, it allots budgets to its productions with its advertisement income. It hence focuses on the domestic TV audience and is ruled by domestic TV ratings (Yu, 2012a, pp.28-30).

Its idol drama is both apolitical and political. It is "apolitical" in the sense that SET also follows commercial rules to produce romantic love stories that do not have clear historical and social backgrounds and involve political issues (Yu, 2012a, pp.28-30; Maple, 2015a; b). Yet the SET's romantic TV drama is "political" by way of its dominant use of domestic workers and the

indirect interpellation of an audience's patriotism as SET does not co-produce TV dramas with the PRC or uses overseas performers (Hsiao, 2012; Tu, 2012a).

Certainly, it is simplistic to argue that commercial localism is not concerned about foreign markets at all. Indeed, for SET, overseas revenue has been more of an extra luxury than necessity, whereas other idol drama production companies consider the overseas market as crucial (P2, personal communication, Feb 20, 2013, p.3; EP2, personal communication, Feb 23, 2013, pp.2-4; P1, personal communication, March 26, 2013, pp.1-2; Chai, 2015 cited in Golden Bell Awards, 2015a). Yet, SET also tries to maximise profit by exporting dramas, though in general it is less urgent to do so. As Taiwanese TV continues to shrink, it also needs to export (Chen, Yi and Kao, 2012; Yu, 2012b; Hung, 2014a).

Dictated to strongly by domestic TV ratings and scarce advertisement revenue, SET has been restrictive in resource allocation with a clear cost-profit margin. The budget control is so tight that SET avoids commercially risky dramas such as high-cost, challenging and non-profitable dramas. It tends to reproduce the most commercially proven formula – urban romantic comedy (Yu, 2012a, p.30). SET also copies Japanese and South Korean TV dramas that are successful in the Taiwanese market (F.-c. I. Yang, 2013). It has done this in the most economical manner, e.g. plagiarism – reworking successful drama plots instead of purchasing adaptation rights from their holders (Mao, 2010).

The main language of SET's idol drama is still Mandarin. Yet it has a high percentage of Hokkien – the language used by the Hoklo Taiwanese ethnicity, compared to the idol dramas produced by independent companies that operate at regional scale. It helps mediate the local identity by fitful use of language uttered by comedic supporting roles. SET's idol drama usually has "sweet-grass figures" (comic sidekick) – characters that are meant for humour which relies on ethnicity-based common sense and are usually ethnically *benshengren* (F.-c. I. Yang, 2013, p.1085). In general, SET's principles are a domestic cast, elements and funding, and a standardised formula.

According to scriptwriter S5 (personal communication, Feb 12, 2013, p.24) that has worked for SET, SET is a big company so that it has been conservative and mainly produced safe dramas. S5 argues that running media companies and a TV station demands seniority and economic capital, and Taiwanese TV managers and production company bosses tend to be senior men. The senior male managers judge market demand with statistic reports and tend to adopt

previously successful value-laden plots (Yu, 2012a, pp.28-30). In the mind-set of SET, idol dramas should be romantic and in pursuit of individual happiness in a private world. They should not touch subject-matter such as the greater common good and grand political narrative (Yu, 2012a, p.30; b, pp.26-28; Wu, 2013). Stories dealing with the negative aspects of capitalist society are not welcome in SET, which requests its producers and writers to avoid marginal social identities, hard topics and social agendas.

Moreover, the male managers in SET also tend to reproduce stereotypical gender ideas and values, instead of observing and addressing new female demands (Yu, 2012a; b). Writers in SET have been struggling with its stereotypical gender values. According to S5 (personal communication, Feb 12, 2013, pp.9-10), a male senior TV manager of SET, whom she worked with, seemingly holds a simplistic and stereotypical perception towards women. He once asked a scriptwriter (S5's colleague) to follow his idea in a plot in which the male protagonist succeeds in winning the female protagonist's heart by "reserving a whole restaurant". He believes that women are materialistic and a man can win their hearts quite simply by showing his wealth and buying them material possessions and physical comfort. The writer found it difficult to follow his idea rooted in simplistic and outdated perception about women because she thought that the plotting would not persuade the female audiences of idol drama. S5 and her colleague believe that their idol drama audience would appreciate spiritual values more than material comfort and much more buy into a story in which man and woman form a relationship naturally and spontaneously in interaction. S5 and her colleague often experience similar situations. But it is very difficult for them to persuade their male boss. In general, the manager decides. They can choose to either leave or stay in the project. S5 usually stays and tries to play games with his ideas:

> I usually choose to listen to him (the manager) but I can also be a little rebellious. For instance, if he (the manager) wants a restaurant scene, I will give him a restaurant scene. However, the things that happen within it will definitely not be expected by the manager… I always want to overcome (his orders and ways of thinking). If I get caught by him and he insists that I follow his directions, I would give up and think: "Okay! (You can do whatever you like.) This female character can fall in love with this guy in the restaurant!" I usually take the restaurant scene as what the male character would like to do for the female character. However, I believe that the female character will not react the way the male would like her to in this setting. I always struggle with this process… I try to divert away from his (the manager) direction... This seems like he (the manager) is giving a puzzle to solve and I'm taking it on as a challenge. (S5, personal communication, Feb 12, 2013, p.10)

The commercial localism represented by SET, as introduced, leads to low-cost production, content standardisation and the reproduction of local patriarchal values and stereotypical ideas towards women. The commercial localism has been domestically successful (Hung, 2014a). SET

reached its peak time when its idol drama *Fated to Love You* (2008) obtained the highest TV ratings in the history of idol drama (Alexandri, 2008; Cheng, 2011). In the long run, SET will have a monopoly in the domestic market of idol drama, defeating the drama workers who do not agree with SET's strategy. By that time SET will control and determine the production of idol dramas in Taiwan, setting conditions for the inter-Asian packaging I am going to analyse. The production companies that have their own production orientations have tried to survive in their own ways. They have not preferred a low-cost approach and they have attempted to develop the know-how of diverse genres and build up expertise. Other producers have prioritised their own personal expression. The producers that do not side with SET need to take advantage of overseas revenue and compete with each other for TV ratings, short-term profits, long-term development, acknowledgement and reputation in Taiwanese market.

This chapter analyses four inter-Asian packaging strategies that are opposed to the commercial localism represented by SET. They are represented by four idol drama production companies and their head producers: Virginia Liu of Power Generation Entertainment; Tsai Yueh-Hsun of Prajna Works; Jerry Feng (Comic International) in affiliation with GTV; and Angie Chai (Comic Ritz). They have owned their personal production companies which have provided dramas to Taiwanese TV stations. This chapter examines their creative strategies' advantages and constraints as well as the criticisms surrounding them. In short, they actively seek resources and alliances in the region. They interact with foreign buyers during story construction. Doing so, they are relatively free from the domestic TV station's budgetary constraint, but they cannot compete with commercial localism which attracts audiences with local elements in the domestic market. Although their strategies have contributed to the heterogeneity and diversification of idol dramas, there have been controversies surrounding them concerning the economic feasibility and cultural validity of the strategies.

## 5.1 Narrative Inter-Asian Drama

Inter-Asian packaging does not necessarily mean inter-Asian depiction on screen; a Chinese-language TV drama may cast South Korean actors for ethnic Chinese roles. My term of "narrative inter-Asian dramas" refers to the TV dramas that engage two or more East Asian cultures, in particular those consciously making cross-cultural dialogues. They not only use foreign casts but

also have inter-Asian depictions. Such works are usually called “cross-cultural film” in East Asian film studies for their depictions of cross-cultural relations (Hitchcock, 2002; Hyland, 2002; K.-C. Lo, 2005; 2014; Yeh, 2010a; Dasgupta, 2013). The narrative inter-Asian dramas are usually less commercially profitable for difficulties in shooting and scripting as well as lower interests from mainstream audience so that Taiwanese idol drama industry has had only a small number of such dramas, as I have mentioned in the beginning of the thesis, citing Peter Ho-sun Chan. It may be argued that, so far, these productions have commonly occurred when production companies intended to obtain a professional reputation in the industry. With the accumulation of reputation (symbolic capital), a production company can earn calls and work opportunities from TV stations for long-term business and economic capital. For instance, a narrative inter-Asian drama *Letter 1949* penned by scriptwriter S3 developed from the purpose of its production company – Eastern Shine Production Co. – to pursue international reputation.

> *Letter 1949* is a TV drama that Eastern Shine made for recognition. They (Eastern Shine) let me know that they, at the beginning, knew that the drama would not have very high commercial profit. They will produce other dramas to balance their commercial imperative. Their aim in *Letter 1949* was to produce a quality product. They intended to build the company’s quality of production skills or capability of producing quality drama in this project. Eastern Shine’s capability was recognised in an overseas market – the PRC – because of the drama. (S3, personal communication, Jan 25, 2013, p.19)

Similarly, Virginia Liu developed *Asian Trilogy* to establish a brand name at the beginning of her drama career. According to EP1 (personal communication, July 24, 2013, p.2), the *Asian Trilogy* was a promoting strategy – a name-making practice when Liu’s company just began. Because the strategy prioritises critical acclaim over short-term profit, commercial production companies have seldom adopted it as a main strategy – but they do so occasionally. I observed that Liu’s company has produced more narrative inter-Asian dramas than any other production companies. In this section I will use her as a case study to illustrate the strategy and its constraints.

Virginia Liu probably was the first producer who self-labelled with “Asia”.[75] On Liu’s company introduction, she identifies her company as a Taiwan-based show business brand based in Taiwan, “aiming at all entertainment-related business in Asia, to ultimately worldwide”.[76] Liu thinks that an idol drama producer tends to be and must be more borderless (compared to other labour divisions in a production team):

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[75] Although *Meteor Garden* packaged Taiwanese and Japanese elements and its sequel cast a Singapore-based actress, its two producers Angie Chai and Jerry Feng did not hold clear regional plans.
[76] Available at: http://www.pgestar.com/about.php [Accessed 6 October 2015].

> "Producer" is more borderless…I have had many contacts with (business in) many countries for the performer talents I represent. The main reason is that I am running an independent company so that most of the times I must stand at the front line to make contacts. (P1, personal communication, March 26, 2013, p.5)

This strategy is related to her personal background and work experience. Liu comes from a *waishengren* family and has been educated in a westernised environment:

> (Choosing inter-Asian packaging) is related to my family background. My parents were both very well-educated in their generation. My father studied in the US. He was familiar with Western culture which I have contacted since young. To be honest, I do not know much about local culture[77]…I studied in Christian college for secondary school. My education was very Western. My personal growth was not very local. (P1, personal communication, March 26, 2013, pp.4-5)

Her career began in the 1980s when the Old Three dominated Taiwanese TV. She worked for a Taiwan-based media tycoon Ge Fu-Hong who has had very good regional connections. Ge has been active in the Taiwanese entertainment business since the 1980s. She started as a TV producer at the Old Three and has gradually owned several important Taiwanese entertainment companies, such as Fulong Production Co. and Azio Satellite TV Station, etc. (He, 2012). Her regional career covers talent agency and TV business. She has represented many Taiwanese actors who usually work at regional scale, in particular Kaneshiro Takeshi, Lin Chi-Ling, and F4 (He, 2012). She has good regional connections with, in particular, Hong Kong and Japanese business (Tsai, 2005, p.102). She once represented the South Korean idol group Super Junior in the Mandarin-speaking media market (Yeh, 2011). Ge encouraged Liu to forge links with foreign media industries.

> My ex-employer Ge Fu-Hong commonly requested us to stay in contact with foreign businesses…Long time ago she had arranged us to visit Fuji TV (Japan), hoping that we did not fall behind in terms of production skills. (P1, personal communication, March 26, 2013, p.5)

Later, working in the Mandarin pop music industry as a talent agent, Liu has had many interactions with Japanese and Hong Kong TV, film and pop music since the 1980s. As a pop music idol band producer, she introduced American-born ethnic Chinese hip hop band LA Boys to debut in Taiwan in the early 1990s. When she started her drama career, she still preferred inter-Asian operation (P1, personal communication, March 26, 2013, pp.2-3).

As a commercial media producer, for reference and appropriation Liu has usually interacted with the advanced media industries in Hong Kong, Japan and South Korea whose media products attract her own target audience (P1, personal communication, March 26, 2013, pp.2-3). For Liu,

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[77] The term "local culture" that Liu used here mainly refers to the ethnic culture of the *benshengren (*Hoklo) Taiwanese – opposite to the *waishengren*'s culture.

inter-Asian drama packaging is to enhance the TV industry in Taiwan. She developed *Asian Trilogy* to improve her drama-making skill by co-operating with advanced industries. Witnessing that idol drama was able to go to the regional markets, she pondered that maybe through such productions she could make better links with the outer world (P1, personal communication, March 26, 2013, p.2). Conducting inter-Asian packaging, she hoped that technological interactions could, on the one hand, take the dramas to the regional world and, on the other, bring in the production know-how of those advanced media centres to her TV industry (P1, personal communication, March 26, 2013, p.2).

Liu received positive support from Hong Kong, Japan and South Korea. Her *Asian Trilogy* interested Warner Music Hong Kong Branch. “This project was not very Taiwanese so it (Warner Music HK) supported” (P1, personal communication, March 26, 2013, pp.3-4). Her first inter-Asian idol drama *Tomorrow* (2002) adapted Japanese manga *Asunaro White Paper* (1992-1993) by Saimon Fumi. Liu added more border-crossing elements in the adaptation by constructing a protagonist who was born to a Taiwanese mother and Japanese father, grew up in Hong Kong and Taiwan and later studied in Japan. To promote the drama, Liu also invited the Japanese original manga creator to visit Taiwan (Liu, 2002).

*Tomorrow* was a commercial success and as a result Liu obtained more space and financial resources to further her plan (Liu, 2003a; Wu, 2003a). She wanted to co-produce with the South Korean TV industry and received positive feedback from Media Banker, a South Korean company (P1, personal communication, March 26, 2013, p.3). The company was led by Kim Seong Nyeol, a South Korean media entrepreneur who worked in Hong Kong as a senior representative of Korean Broadcasting System (KBS) International. The South Korean producer “also had been contacting Hong Kong (media industry) and also thought that the concept of pan-Asia was very good” (P1, personal communication, March 26, 2013, p.3). With his mediation, Liu tried to interest KBS in co-producing her second work *Scent of Love* (2003), and with that aim she incorporated more cultural features to attract the South Korean funder, staff and cast. Liu also put in many South Korean elements, such as an old folk melody (“*Five Hundred Years of Regret*”), and drew on the history of East Asian filmic and artistic interactions (P1, personal communication, March 26, 2013, pp.12-13).

However, KBS turned her down as it was in an administrative transition due to the year’s presidential election outcome. Hence, Liu’s team completed the shooting by raising extra funds

from the South East Asian market (Liu, 2003a; b). The *Asian Trilogy* was planned to have three serial dramas. Liu planned that the third TV drama would be based on *Turn Right Turn Left*, a picture book created by Taiwanese writer Ji Mi, but she was forced to give up as the adaptation right was purchased by a third party (P1, personal communication, March 26, 2013, p.2). After the suspension of *Asian Trilogy*, even though Liu did not label her more recent idol dramas with "Asia", most of the dramas had Japanese elements. *Honey and Clover* (2008) was an adaptation of the Japanese manga of the same title and was shot partly in Kagawa, Japan (Chi, 2011). Adapting the manga was a safer way to take the Japanese market but Liu also liked it very much for its adult reflection on youth (P1, personal communication, March 26, 2013, p.6). *Because of You* (2010) cast Tanaka Chie, a Japanese actress working in Taiwanese film and TV, as the female lead (Yang, 2009c). Her latest idol drama *Home* (2012) staged a Taiwanese medical soldier's trajectory between three political forces in Taiwan and mainland China during 1945-1949 (the ending moment of WWII and the Chinese Civil War). She decided to narrate from the viewpoint of a *benshengren* (Hoklo) Taiwanese protagonist who interacts with KMT soldiers and CCP soldiers and maintains distance from the nationalists (P1, personal communication, March 26, 2013, p.6).

Among the four inter-Asian packagers introduced in this chapter, Liu is closest to the pole of personal expression, in my observation. She is a hyphenated worker – both producer and head writer in her TV dramas.

> I treat every TV drama a work of mine…In commercial cultural production, this is not practical. Yet…spending so much time and efforts on these works, I still hope to input my ideas in them. (P1, personal communication, March 26, 2013, pp.7-8)

Although Liu works in a commercial system, she does not give formulaic stories. She likes to dramatise various cross-cultural interactions. Her dramas have had many elements, talents and settings, including Hong Kong, Japan, the PRC and South Korea. She does not have a particular nationalist standpoint and address the mainstream sentiments and tastes of local audiences in Taiwan that have been cultivated by commercial localism. Her TV dramas, consequently, failed commercially because they are much more personal, unique and complex. She can only attract a niche audience group that likes complex dramas (P1, personal communication, March 26, 2013, pp.7-8; EP1, personal communication, July 24, 2013, p.2).

Apart from time-consuming negotiation, another difficulty of narrative inter-Asian dramas was technological. Foreign casting usually brings technical troubles in the presentation. Poor

presentation of the actors would cause cognitive dissonance in the audiences and discourage them. Take *Scent of Love,* for instance. Arranging South Korean actors and actresses who do not speak Mandarin fluently in a Taiwanese idol drama is very troublesome (P1, personal communication, March 26, 2013, pp.16-17; Chai, 2015 cited in Golden Bell Awards, 2015a). At that time when *Scent of Love* was produced, South Korean TV dramas were dubbed into Mandarin on local TV (Kim, 2005, p.195). Local Taiwanese audiences were not familiar with Korean language, so including a large proportion of South Korean language in *Scent of Love* might discourage them. Liu decided to assign all South Korean characters some Mandarin-speaking background. But because of the commercial pressure to increase sales, she chose South Korean actors who had better market value. However, as they did not speak Mandarin, she dubbed them in *Scent of Love* and left only a minimum percentage of Korean-speaking scenes (P1, personal communication, March 26, 2013, pp.16-17). This decision might draw her drama closer to Taiwanese local mass audiences, yet, in general the narrative that constantly shifts between two countries is quite difficult for a mass audience. Liu's executive producer reflected on his work experience and said that mainstream Taiwanese audiences felt distance towards her works.

> Based on my experiences over the last few years, the mainstream Taiwanese audience holds a strong feeling of detachment towards the domestic dramas casting foreign (Japanese, South Korean or Hong Kong) actors. Taiwanese TV audience like to sense a "buddy, buddy" feeling in the dramas...another problem is dubbing…Humans still rely on ear and voice when they are emotionally touched… (EP1, personal communication, July 24, 2013, p.3)

**Respecting Counterpart's Sentiments**

An inter-Asian TV drama packaging is an ensemble formed of different national participants. The participants need to negotiate over many issues, in particular historiography, political facts and world views. Writing or talking on the history of East Asia is itself a "political practice" for the region's historical entanglement and contemporary conflicts (Sun, 2000a; b). This would also discourage mass audiences. Not all people – including TV workers – are familiar with and interested in inter-Asian interaction in the drama. Moreover, this type of depiction could be controversial, conflicting, time-consuming and very challenging even if it is well-rounded. It could enflame a real national political issue (Ota, 2004, pp.85-86).

Liu conducted her "political practice" in the making of *Scent of Love*. As the drama links together the traditional East Asian concept of reincarnated destiny and the historical and

contemporary ties of Taiwan and South Korea, she had to address the South Korean people's dominant attitude towards Japan. The main issue of *Scent of Love* was that Liu came up with a plot that could be considered unthinkable in South Korea. The drama revolves around the love between a Taiwanese man and a South Korean woman, whose previous reincarnations are a Japanese imperial soldier and an engaged Korean woman during WWII. The two societies' different historiographies and attitudes towards Japanese colonialism have been argued by Soyoung Kim (2008, p.196) as a consequence of the pre-colonial and post-colonial histories in South Korea and Taiwan. After Japanese colonial rule, South Korean society continued to view Japan as its national foe and the South Korean government administered an anti-Japan policy, prohibiting cultural imports from Japan. The romance between a Korean woman and a Japanese imperial soldier was still unthinkable in contemporary South Korean media products. But Taiwan entered another highly suppressive political power structure of the KMT from mainland China. Consequently, it changed its attitude and even felt nostalgia towards the Japanese rule (Kim, 2008). The relative distance from KMT's Sino-centrism and Chinese nationalism has made the Taiwanese depart from "unitary national narrative" to micro history and the myriad history of individuals, including those of wartime Japan (Chang, 2010, p.111). They do not necessarily see every Japanese individual as absolutely evil. The Taiwanese media makers of the 2000s treated the Japanese element as a handy and cliché plotting resource in their narration of the Taiwanese future, argued by Sharon Chialan Wang (2009, p.247).

Liu's South Korean adviser, Lee Hee Woo, a senior South Korean scriptwriter, suggested to her that in order to go more easily in South Korea, the drama ought to end tragically in the present-day and historical storyline (P1, personal communication, March 26, 2013, pp.13-14). Liu agreed with the suggestion and also thought that the arrangement made sense. Liu was aware of the South Koreans' anti-Japanese sentiment. But the WWII story for her was imaginable. She thought that a sad ending could appease the South Korean sentiment.

> The Koreans objected such thing to happen: the (Japanese-Korean) romance was forbidden at that time (in Korea). Thus we presented a tragic wartime romance: this was a love relationship unaccepted by the society and family. (This was the main reason for the tragedy in the present-day storyline). They told me that (this would make the drama to be released and be accepted in South Korea more easily)…We thought it made sense. (P1, personal communication, March 26, 2013, pp.13-14)

Dramatic consideration encouraged her to agree with him, too. She thought that tragic feelings stayed in people's minds much longer than happy ending (P1, personal communication, March 26, 2013, p.20).

However, Liu had a few market dilemmas. She appeased South Korean anti-Japan sentiment but the plotting suppressed the Taiwanese female audience's inclination to see happy endings. She tried to appeal to the inclination through the subject-matter of reincarnation; the heroine leaves the Taiwanese hero in this life for her destiny, but she promises the hero that she will reunite with him in their next life. This life ends sadly but their next life will have a happy ending (He, 2004).

To understand the Taiwanese domestic response, I collected four newspaper posts from Taiwanese audiences expressing their fondness for the drama while asking their questions about it (Chi, 2003; Denlison, 2004; Huan, 2004; Lin, 2004). All of these Taiwanese audiences praised the beautiful production of *Scent of Love.* Yet they seemed to treat it as an ordinary melodrama and wondered why the protagonists could not have a happy ending. These Taiwanese audiences seemed to understand the subject-matter of reincarnated destiny, but they complained about the protagonists' lack of agency to fight against destiny. One audience wondered why the Taiwanese hero's ending was so fateful and why he must bear the predestined burden.

> I think that the male protagonist was a bit pitiful. How can the heroine forget their promise but he must carry his vow? This was a bit unfair. The hero sacrificed his previous life during the war but also has to pay for his previous life's promise in the current (reincarnated) life… (Chi, 2003)

Another audience member spoke from a critic's viewpoint and commented on his/her blog that the drama carries so many messages that it is complicated and confusing (pip, 2004). He/she also wondered why it has a tragic ending and thought that the death of the heroine did not make sense (pip, 2004). None of these Taiwanese feedbacks associated the tragic end as being caused by South Korean influence. As chapter 2 indicated, different imagined worlds formed by official patriarchal nationalist discourses might contradict each other. *Scent of Love* seemingly experienced a "negotiated or resistant reading" in the Taiwanese market in Stuart Hall's term. In his influential theoretical model of encoding/decoding, Hall (1980, pp.168-169) notes that media as a meaningful discourse presumes a match between encoding and decoding sides. The decoder-audience shall be in an ideal reading position preferred by the encoder-producer so as to understand and enjoy a media product. Resistant reading (e.g. misunderstanding) would take place if an individual, whose ethno-cultural-social structural position is very different and distant

from the preferred position, misinterprets the media product. The lack of equivalence between the two sides is the main reason for the misunderstanding. *Scent of Love*'s primary decoder was presumably a South Korean; the Taiwanese were not designed as primary decoders. Thus it is also difficult for a Taiwanese audience to understand the narrative in *Scent of Love*. Moreover, they generated negotiating or even resistant reading.

*Scent of Love* was not appealing to Taiwanese people because of its complicated signification and ideological articulation of Taiwanese and South Korean mainstream sentiments. A question should be raised here. Why did the Taiwanese audience want a happy ending in the story? The first factor was their resistance against fatalism, against the East Asian traditional way of thinking and instead wishing to see an agency that could break the predestined curse. This was related to the fact that the audiences of idol dramas had been living in a more westernised social cultural environment that encouraged individual agency. The second reason was probably also connected to the Taiwanese post-colonial attitude towards Japan, characterised by a lack of anti-Japan sentiment. They might not treat the drama as a political text when watching it. In other words, this drama is a site where post-colonial Taiwanese people (both producers and consumers) encountered post-colonial South Korean nationalism. I argue that there are two types of audience that might understand better why the drama has a sad ending: those who are familiar with the theme of reincarnated fatalism and those who understand the South Korean attitude towards Japan. This explains why *Scent of Love* was a commercial failure in the Taiwanese market due to its narrow audience base. Those who liked this drama tended to be more elderly and thoughtful thinkers.

Liu admits that her personal orientation is very different from most audiences in Taiwan (EP1, personal communication, March 26, 2013, pp.14-17). Reflecting her previous dramas, including *Scent of Love*, Liu concludes that her dramas are more her own expressions than carefully calculated market-driven works. Liu admits that many idol drama audiences probably do not appreciate her dramas. These dramas can attract mostly audiences who are similar to her.

> I think that my company's dramas are not for teenagers. They probably cannot understand these dramas…*Scent of Love* is a drama for adults. I met some people who like the drama. One of my friends told me that she talked about *Scent of Love* when going to Sotheby's (in Hong Kong). An auctioneer at Sotheby's loves that drama very much. I responded by saying "that's bad! It means that the drama does not appeal to mass audience". (EP1, personal communication, March 26, 2013, pp.14-17)

The sarcastic reflection seemed to prove that the *Asian Trilogy*, which was related to a Hong Kong transnational company, indeed had attracted at least a cultural elite in Hong Kong. This exactly indicates the purpose of Liu's inter-Asian packaging. Liu's executive producer EP1 echoes her reflection and comments about her uniqueness:

> Power Generation Entertainment's central spirit is that our dramas do not appeal to the mainstream taste that has been fed with sensationalism; we don't make ordinary things. Over these years, we have made dramas that brought some challenges…with quite pioneering approaches. Although they have not had good ratings but they have received good acclaims…Our cast have not been just Taiwanese actors. We have transnational cast...We hope to bring new things…Our company has established a brand image of making thought-provoking and complex TV dramas...In summary, the outcomes of a production company really depend on its leader's personality, strategy and attitude. (EP1, personal communication, July 24, 2013, pp.2-3)

## 5.2 Global Culture Production

Generally, Virginia Liu has not gained in terms of Taiwanese TV ratings that are addressed and cultivated by commercial localism from SET. Nor has she formed a strong competition to SET. Yet, she has pursued realisation of her own vision in the field of idol drama. Witnessing the non-feasibility of inter-Asian narrative of Liu's dramas in the commercial market, the producers who are more concerned about practicality, such as Tsai Yueh-Hsun, have avoided adopting this strategy in their idol drama making. The *Meteor Garden* director, born in 1968, became a director-producer in four idol dramas and two films (Tung, 2007). Previously working as an actor and off-screen film-maker since late 1980s, Tsai witnessed the crisis of Taiwanese film industry and is very eager to break technical ground in Taiwanese TV drama industry to produce genres that are beyond the limits of the Taiwanese local TV market.

> I feel that I am in a race, trying to catch up very hard. The Western TV dramas…I cannot even see them in my horizon. (Tsai, 2006 cited in *Eslite Reader*, 2006, p.56)

He is keen on accumulating skills and know-how of different types of commercial productions. To his mind, the commercial and artistic sectors of drama making feed each other. Commercial productions are in the outer concentric circles that would financially support the artistic creations in the inner circles (Tsai, 2012). Seeing the production conditions of Taiwanese commercial TV industry deteriorating, he identifies himself strategically as a commercial worker and pays close attention to audience demand in order to rebuild a good commercial system (Chiu, 2009; 2012).

> I am not an auteur director. I consider market and audience. (Tsai, 2012)

> You cannot merely think that "I want to do it in this way". You must consider the audience…their capability to understand, their feeling and the reasons for which they would accept your works or not. (P2, personal communication, Feb 20, 2013, pp.8-9)

But unlike the commercially conservative SET, Tsai's target audience is beyond the conventional female fans of romantic idol dramas and he has successfully attracted them with medical and action dramas.

> The most different thing between me and the rest of the industry has been that I do not use number and money to assess what I do and its effect. If you judge what I have done over the last few years in term of money, they could not have been done or hardly been done as they have been risky. (P2, personal communication, Feb 20, 2013, p.13)

These dramas have been the specialty of Hollywood and other more advanced media industries in the world because they demand more money and advanced narrative skills. Making them is particularly challenging for the Taiwanese TV drama industry. For the funding issues, he has taken advantage of the regional market for these more expensive drama projects.

> The Taiwanese TV drama industry has confined its productions to young adult romance or urban love stories. It has not dared to produce police action genre because the genre is very expensive to produce. In such vicious circle, our skill to produce police action genre has disappeared. We did not dare to think about it… Taiwanese TV drama industry must go beyond Taiwan and enter Asia so as to have more funding and variety in its subject-matters. (Tsai, 2009 cited in Lan, 2009)

Tsai has had the idea of taking advantage of East Asian market before the success of *Meteor Garden*. It was not until *Meteor Garden* that Tsai realised his dream and found the key to the regional market.

> When I was young, 20 years old…I already told people: "we (Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, PRC, and Taiwan) could co-operate to make TV dramas! Let's choose a project that interests everyone…Let's make *Three Kingdoms*!"...At that time, I've already had the idea of locating the great Asia Pacific region as a market. Yet, it was in *Meteor Garden* that I started to try to export Taiwanese TV drama overseas. (P2, personal communication, Feb 20, 2013, pp.3-4)

Observing the *Meteor Garden*'s success, he believed that in the regional mainstream markets, Taiwanese TV dramas and modernity were not as craved for and desired as Japanese media culture and modernity. Thus he told stories centring on elemental themes:

> The most important thing for a TV drama that targets international markets is its inclusivity. The TV drama should not have too many elements that can only be understood locally. There are many barriers between national cultures so that you cannot communicate to the markets with what they are not interested in…Of course, once our country's charisma is extremely strong, we may be able to talk to them about the local culture in Taiwan. Before that, we have to communicate to them with elements which they can understand immediately. (Tsai, 2009 cited in *101 Summit*, 2009)

The Taiwanese particularity in his images for regional audiences lies on Taiwanese know-how and sensibility in producing modernity (Tsai, 2009 cited in *101 Summit*, 2009). Taiwanese acting talents that embodied the Taiwanese know-how, sensibility and modernity are important when Tsai presented the generic themes:

> Being based in Taiwan, I should establish my own features so that people would recognise me…I have been able to make TV dramas over the last few years because I have continuously produced stars...Casting stars (F4) that have a big (East Asian) market, I can raise funds to realise my dream. The foreigners who have watched so many big-budget quality productions would like to watch Taiwanese dramas mainly because of the stars. As long as I produce good

> dramas with the stars, my market will grow…The actors would benefit from all my input to dramas. If the dramas are attractive, the audience will be moved, like the characters, and appreciate their performance. (Tsai, 2009 cited in Lan, 2009)

He also made the best use of Taiwanese geographical elements for his generic images to create the charisma within his works (Tsai, 2009 cited in Lan, 2009). As he gained success, he received the Taiwanese governmental support for shooting and has welcomed the support in return. His acceptance of Taiwanese governmental support is most obvious in the making of *Black and White*, which received shooting support from Kaohsiung, Taiwan's second largest city:

> Without the help of the Kaohsiung Municipal government and the local people, I could not have made *Black and White*…Their help was invaluable…I planned to shoot 40% in Kaohsiung. In the end, 90% was shot there. I fully felt that the Kaohsiung government was determined to support the film and TV industry. I would highlight Kaohsiung in my overseas press tour and invite fans to visit Kaohsiung and the shooting locations, so as to maximise the effect of *Black and White* as a part of Kaohsiung's city branding. (Tsai, 2009 cited in Lan, 2009)

With regard to selling TV dramas to regional market, Tsai accomplished his objects step by step, in the observation of scriptwriter S3 who worked for him (personal communication, Jan 25, 2013, p.2). He tried first of all to emulate Japanese TV drama in a way more akin to Taiwanese ethnic reality after the success of *Meteor Garden*. His first own project *Friends* (2003) was an original work and only followed the narrative and aesthetics of Japanese trendy drama. It revolved around seven countryside youngsters, two of whom were indigenous people, struggling in urban Taipei. Tsai (2004 cited in Kao, 2004, p.198; Tung, 2007) labelled it a genuine "trendy drama" that reflected the lives of contemporary Taiwanese youngsters, which most "idols dramas" in *Meteor Garden*'s Cinderella fantasy had not achieved. Nevertheless, *Friends* got low TV ratings due to many factors including the lack of star casting, which made it less marketable. Nor was it particularly well received in the overseas market, despite receiving warm feedback from local Internet-generation youngsters (Tsai, 2006 cited in *Eslite Reader*, 2006, p.55).

After this commercial setback, Tsai returned to adaptations of existing works that clearly alluded to Japanese works. He directed and co-produced another TV adaptation of Japanese same-name manga *Mars* (2004) together with Angie Chai. This drama set the record for the highest budget in Taiwanese idol drama history in 2004 (Nien, 2004) and had good feedback from online TV critics, TV ratings, and overseas sales (Yeh, 2004; Chen, 2005a; Liu, 2005). When the Japanese TV drama *White Tower* (2003) became a huge success in Japan and Taiwan in 2003 and 2004, Tsai successfully caught the regional interest in medical workers' power politics by producing *White Tower* (2006) (Liew, 2011). This high-budget medical drama received both

commercial and critical acclaim in 2006 and 2007 (Y.-H. Yeh, 2007).[78] However, the two dramas were so expensive by Taiwanese standards that Tsai also began relying heavily on star power to ensure overseas marketing. Vic Chou and Jerry Yan, two members of idol group F4 from the *Meteor Garden*, provided a very bankable cast, and in return Tsai refashioned their on-screen personas in the displays of their male qualities (Tsai, 2009 cited in Lan, 2009).

Indifferent to national politics in Taiwan, instead, these works addressed the personal concerns of urban subjects, and supplied hopeful endings to them. One common motif among them was the yearnings of youth, whose patriarch-/matriarch-child relationship was constantly split or in trouble, for a better, more hopeful future in post-Confucian East Asian urban society. *Meteor Garden* gives a complex view of patriarchal social relationship (Deppman, 2009, p.103). *White Tower* depicted hospital politics in a Confucian hierarchical structure, in which senior male teachers resemble father figures to students, and brought more criticism (Liew, 2011, p.261).

In terms of overseas marketing, Tsai has flexibly responded the demands and regulations of these East Asian markets to recover his production cost. When idol dramas he produced have many elements that could not pass the censorship of the PRC's state-owned TV system, his star cast were the main driving force for mainland Chinese buyer to purchase them. *Mars* has two traumatic teenage protagonists, teenage killing and domestic violence which could not easily pass PRC censorship. *White Tower* unpacks the power politics and corruption of medical organisations. *Black and White* (2009) involves a transnational arms dealer and its crime. Because of the star cast in the dramas, they were still purchased by mainland Chinese buyers and their special versions were broadcast by China Entertainment Satellite TV and Shanghai Dragon Satellite TV (Yang, 2004; *Sohu Entertainment*, 2005; 2009; Feng, 2006; Chu, 2007b). *Black and White* did not pass Chinese censorship and it was only broadcast by China Entertainment Satellite TV, a southern Chinese satellite service (P2, personal communication, Feb 20, 2013, p.11).

He also attracted the Japanese market with the star cast. At the time of the three dramas, Japanese market was more affluent than PRC market (P2, personal communication, Feb 20, 2013, p.3). Tsai's idol dramas starred member of *Meteor Garden*'s actors and were mostly

[78] *White Tower* gave Tsai an award for best director in TV serial drama in the Golden Bell Awards – the most important annual award for the Taiwanese TV industry. It received the highest broadcasting fee from Japan among Taiwanese TV serial dramas and was aired by NHK's satellite channel (Y.-H. Yeh, 2007).

highlighted in Japan. *White Tower* was even broadcast by NHK in Japan (Y.-H. Yeh, 2007). Tsai largely recouped his production expense for *White Tower* from its Japanese sale:

> At that time, Japan was a very important market. Entering the Japanese market was very special…A Taiwanese idol drama that was able to enter the Japanese market was most highlighted by the media…It (the Japanese market) was very crucial to me because, at that time, mainland China (market) was not that big. Its (mainland China) value for our cost recovery was not very high. Among the Asia Pacific region, the Japanese market had the highest value…*White Tower* was sold to Japan at a very good price, which covered most of my production cost. (P2, personal communication, Feb 20, 2013, p.3)

Tsai's strategy to make use of the overseas markets flexibly for progress in commercial storytelling has offered valuable opportunities for a few TV workers who are interested in exploring the dark side of society and humanity using a variety of commercial genres, such as writer S3 – a theatre director who is very concerned about social issues and entered TV drama writing for a living. S3 worked with Tsai in *White Tower* and *Black and White*. They had a good co-working experience in the *White Tower* that centres on problems in contemporary medical institution that was very concerned by S3 (personal communication, Jan 25, 2013, p.13). Yet in the development of synopsis for *Black and White,* there was tension between them. S3 initially wanted an even darker story whose pace is as fast as American action TV dramas in *Black and White*, but Tsai decided to make an action comedy and commented that the pace is too fast for his target audience (personal communication, Jan 25, 2013, pp.9-13). Nonetheless, Tsai accepted a few of the darker settings added by S3 which drew on political and military incidents in Taiwanese history – arms purchase and governmental corruption – in *Black and White*.

> We wanted to tell you about the existence of a transnational munitions industry behind all the incidents – the very dark force that hands into the political sphere via trading to control every country. Things like police corruption and drug dealing on the surface are in fact chained to and manipulated by the dark force from the top. (S3, personal communication, Jan 25, 2013, p.9)

Tsai's TV dramas have not been strongly tied to the Taiwanese society, particularity in order to enter the regional market and maximise the revenue. The dramatic worlds in his teenage dramas (*Meteor Garden* and *Mars*) are small, personal and look generic. They were also divorced from their Japanese contexts and modified for a non-Japanese East Asian mass market. Even adult-oriented *White Tower* also had a non-specific story setting. It is a same-name TV adaptation of Taiwanese novelist Hou Wen-yong's best-selling novel. Hou collected material from his work experience in the National Taiwan University Hospital – one of the oldest and most prestigious hospitals in Taiwan – but set the novel in a non-existent Taiwanese university hospital (Y.-F. Huang, 2006; M.-J. Lin, 2006a, p. 24). Tsai produced different versions of the TV adaptation for its marketing in Japan and PRC because the original novel mentioned Taiwanese president

(Feng, 2006). *White Tower* provided a good model for Tsai to adopt in *Black and White* in handling political subtext in a nationally non-specific setting (Chu, 2009). The *Black and White* that mentions international arms trade and crimes might have offended a few East Asian governments, so Tsai and S3 decided to make up a "Harbour City" in the drama to protect their creative security.

> Many elements we talked about in the drama actually emerged from contemporary Taiwanese reality…so a al city helped us not to be constrained when we developed the story. (S3, personal communication, Jan 25, 2013, p.9)

Fictionalisation provides a way for creators to go through state censorship safely in a media environment that does not permit freedom of expression. Later, its prequel movie even makes up a fictional country as the base for the munitions company so as to minimise political troubles.

> I fictionalised it (the story) so it did not refer to any place. I took out borders appearing in the story. That means I took out state, ideology, politics and everything. The trouble no longer exists… (P2, personal communication, Feb 20, 2013, p.18)

Nonetheless, the fictional Harbour City rendered Tsai a chance to construct a hyper-modern Chinese-speaking/East Asian city, using Taiwanese landscape. He emulated recognisable symbols from Hollywood action dramas so that Harbour City visually resembled many seaport cities in Hollywood films, such as Miami or Los Angeles. Harbour city, in my opinion, is a televisual visualisation of Taiwan's collective desire for Western (American) and globalised East Asian modernity, and Tsai is the best "makeup artist" for Taiwanese cities. Paradoxically, although this TV drama constructs a more complicated and darker story and characters, it reproduces a Western world view as it designates a number of controversial villains who are connected to the transnational munitions organisation as North Koreans (S3, personal communication, Jan 25, 2013, p.11).

The importance of the Japanese market was relative and conditional for Tsai. When PRC has exceeded Japan to become the largest market of film and TV entertainment in East Asia, Tsai started considering how to appeal to both markets in his productions:

> At that time, Japanese market was very valuable to enter. Yet the Mainland Chinese market has become bigger and bigger. There is another big market in the Asian market. It is No.1 now. We are able to recoup cost from it…so long as I can connect the three places well (mainland China, Japan, and Taiwan)…I could have more capital. More options are possible in my productions. I could cast more actors. I could do projects on amazing subjects. I could introduce newer filming technologies and purchase good equipment. I can make more things possible. These activities would become the driving force for the growth of my markets. The triangle between mainland China, Japan, and Taiwan is the key to whether I can either enter South Korea, which is hard to enter, or regain the market in South East Asia…Therefore, currently it is the most important task to stabilise the triangle. (P2, personal communication, Feb 20, 2013, p.3)

As Tsai's career becomes more regionally successful and his dramas more expensive, he has gradually declined to produce dramas that "speak from a particular social historical position" (P2,

personal communication, Feb 20, 2013, p.9). To be accepted by more people, Tsai's creations are becoming more "inclusive". His dramas are taking out local particularities and avoiding political troubles. Also, he opts for making highly generic dramas. He suggests that if creators could expand their viewpoints and empathy, they would naturally have broader and more inclusive creations (P2, personal communication, Feb 20, 2013, pp.8-9).

Tsai is now moving into a new stage. He announced in 2012 that his new project of "New Asian projects of Chinese-language film and television" would be composed of four TV dramas and films. The project's name seems to say that Tsai has associated himself with a pan-Chinese culture and Tsai admits that he wants to unite Chinese-speaking media companies so as to enter non-Chinese speaking markets for the project:

> I am targeting Asian markets as a Chinese-language subject…The Chinese-language dramas form a collective subject. When I broaden my market base so widely and widen my horizon of creation so widely, what is really important for me is unity. I should enable the Chinese-speaking people in Hong Kong, Taiwan and mainland China to unite with each other. Because of the political reason, we have been separated. However, if we can unite, that is the best power for us to make the strongest film and TV industry in East Asia. Thus, coining the term is to broaden my creation horizon and also to call for unity…If I say "(A new project of) Asian market", I do not produce the sense of unity. Taiwanese creators say that we are expanding in the Asian market as Taiwanese creators. Mainland Chinese creators say that we want to go to the Asian market from mainland Chinese angle. But if I say the Asian market of Chinese-language works, I mean to unite all Chinese-speaking people together to go to the Asian market…Adding the two characters ("Hua yu" – Chinese-language) conveys the message of the unity between us. We do not just make Taiwanese movies, mainland Chinese movies or Hong Kong movies. We unite to make a Chinese-language movie that all Asian people can appreciate….The key to succeed is that the boundary in the three places should disappear. (P2, personal communication, Feb 20, 2013, pp.4-5)

The project is supported by PRC's Beijing Hualubaina Film & TV Company and Japanese Amuse Soft (P2, personal communication, Feb 20, 2013, pp.8-11). The project includes the second prequel to *Black and White*, a TV adaptation of Japanese manga *Midnight Restaurant*, and two TV dramas – *In Love With Aisin Gioro* and *Super Power*, the latter featuring computer-generated special effects (Wang, 2012; C.-W. Wu, 2012). His works are becoming "non-national" in their backgrounds. I propose that these non-national and non-specific films and TV dramas can be seen as "global cultural products" made by Tsai, who is increasingly prioritising international distribution by shedding off, effacing and disembedding from local history and social pulses. Here the "global culture" refers to a cultural product created in a disembedding process described Anthony Giddens (1990, p.21), in which production relation is lifted out of local contexts and restructured across indefinite spans of time-space.

Tsai is not the first global cultural producer of East Asia. Drawing on Giddens, critics called the Hong Kong action genres in the 1990s “global culture”, not only for their globalised market and production locations affected by the market transformation, but also for their mind-set that emulated Hollywood (Fore, 2001, p.117; Lo, 2001, p.266). It may be argued that Tsai’s work is to some degree similar to the Hong Kong action genres. Although Tsai has not started multinational location shooting, he is doing it in an equally delocalised way – creating a fictional city – to bring better global movement for his works. He is also accepting inter-Asian funding and becoming de-localised in terms of finance and crew employment. More importantly, he has drawn his idea of generic temporal-spatial background from Hollywood films such as the *Batman* franchise that has a fictional city as its background. Tsai explained, in the forum of the 2012 National Taiwan University Film Festival, that his decision to fictionalise the setting of *Black and White* was developed from *Meteor Garden*’s non-specific setting and referred to the *Batman* franchise (Tsai, 2012). He is like many Hong Kong film-makers who have aimed for East Asian success by imitating Hollywood and simulating its productions. According to Laikwan Pang (2005, p.160), many East Asian films want to enter global circulation and ascend to “global cinema”, whether they have large or small-scale budgets. Tsai’s works have also aspired to become globally distributed, thus he can also be considered a producer of global culture in his own right in the post-2000 Taiwanese idol drama industry.

Although Tsai’s TV dramas are constantly set in generic urban worlds, they were all shot in Taiwan with Taiwanese talents playing lead roles. Moreover, his works show landscapes and the most modern aspects of Taiwan, and so bring in overseas tourists. Thus Taiwanese people so far have seldom questioned Tsai’s contribution. Moreover, Tsai’s clear production strategy and vision of the future also have persuaded Taiwanese media and audiences to accept him as an important industrial leader (Lan, 2009; Li, 2012; S3, personal communication, Jan 25, 2013, p.2). Taiwanese film critic Tsu-Wei Lan (2009) acclaimed Tsai’s *Black and White* a well-made police action TV drama. Another film critic Chang-An Wang (2009) advocates Tsai’s regional marketing approach. Li Hang, film critic and the runner of film magazine *Cue*, respects Tsai as a brave pioneer in the film and TV industry of Taiwan (Li, 2012). Yu-Ping Michelle Yeh, one of the producers of Taiwanese film *Formula 17* (2004) believes that Tsai’s *Black and White* franchise was important for the industry – the domestic film professionals could learn know-how of making

action film (Yeh, 2012).[79] Tsai was also complimented by SET on "the highly completeness in his productions that have all details they should have" (Chen, 2009, p.125). Even S3, who has also been learning to master commercial production in Taiwan, recognised that Tsai has changed the meaning of idol drama by making important progress in the business (personal communication, Jan 25, 2013, p.2). As mentioned above, S3's personal imagination was suppressed to a certain degree in *Black and White*. S3 admitted with a complex feeling that Tsai made a good decision with regard to the market demand for the action genre, and the making of the action genre, and in the end achieved both a good commercial success and industrial acclaim (personal communication, Jan 25, 2013, pp.17-19). The drama marks the starting point of S3's exploration of social issues in her TV writing career. Her opportunities to write more complicated characters has increased.

> Before *Black and White*, I actually had no chance to write about any dark characters, the world's dark side and dark forces. Since the drama, such chances are getting more and more. I have been able to explore these issues in many of my new dramas. (S3, personal communication, Jan 25, 2013, p.19)

It may be argued that, in the Taiwanese commercial TV industry that strives for regional visibility, profit, acknowledgement and influence, Tsai's inter-Asian strategy has been successful and obtained legitimacy. He has accumulated all kinds of capital from the markets in the region, including fortune, know-how and reputation.

## 5.3 Adapting Manga for TV

The third inter-Asian packager is Jerry Feng, who left his co-founded Comic Ritz and founded Comic International (Comic International, 2003, p.194; Feng, 2005). During 2002 and 2004, Feng produced dramas *Come to My Family* (2002), *The Rose* (2003), and *Michael's Dance* (2004) for the Old Three independently. Since 2005's *It Started with a Kiss* (2005), he has formed an association with GTV in the Taiwanese TV drama market.[80] GTV has aired Feng's idol dramas and is often responsible for overseas sales. Feng also plans to make use of international market to overcome the disadvantage of the fragmented domestic market:

> Many Taiwanese TV dramas just target the domestic market, want to appeal to the existing audiences, and are satisfied with the safe options. This conservativeness in following routines

[79] Yu-Ping Michelle Yeh's profile can be found on list of Taiwan film-makers at Taiwan Cinema website at http://www.taiwancinema.com/ct_32123_39 [Accessed 15 April 2016].

[80] Comic International's official introduction is available at: http://ssn13.am1470.com/20130718_comic.pdf [Accessed 3 April 2016].

> without thinking about improvement would curb the innovation of our drama industry and worsen our production environment…In addition to the domestic market, we should also pay attention to the international market. If we have the international market, we can obtain more resources and produce better dramas, and make Taiwanese dramas achieve international status…Via *Meteor Garden*, we have obtained the entry ticket to the train that carry many of our competitors from other countries. But we are just a new player…How could we overcome difficulties and improve skills? That is a question that we need to contemplate. (Feng, 2003 cited in Comic International, 2003, pp.196-198)

### 5.3.1 Post-Modern Sub-Culture

Two elements define Feng's international strategy: the sub-culture of the teenage girl and Japanese manga adaptation. Feng likes teenage manga very much as an audience (Feng, 2005). He is mainly interested in producing teen dramas that feature young male idol talents and are tailored for early-secondary-school female students, in the views of other idol drama workers (B2, personal communication, Feb 26, 2013, p.1; P1, personal communication, March 26, 2013, p.6). Feng knows that his own idol dramas cannot attract those Taiwanese media consumers who have been watching foreign dramas from Japan and even from the West. Thus he intends to target the teenage audience, who are exposed to media idols from early adolescence.

> We are very clear that the discrepancy (between our idol dramas and the audiences who are used to watching foreign dramas) is not amendable...Thus, I keep producing idol dramas in the hope that the new young audience can identify and grow up together with the young talents, new directors and new scriptwriters. (Feng, 2006 cited in M.-J. Lin, 2006b, p.41)

Feng continually produces idol dramas that feature Taiwanese idols. His successful idol groups include F4 who debuted in 2001, Fahrenheit in 2005 and recently Spexial in 2012 (*Sina Entertainment*, 2015).

Adaptation is advantageous when the original script is not considered profitable for commercial productions. In Feng's trajectory, adapting Japanese manga, which has enjoyed regional popularity, is an economic practice whose effects may be felt beyond the Taiwanese market.

> When I was making *Meteor Garden*, I foresaw that we could sell it back to Japan. At that time everybody felt this idea was impossible and I had to take it as an ideal and an ambition. But it did come true! (Feng, 2006 cited in M.-J. Lin, 2006b, p.42)

Adapting a popular work that has gone through several market tests guarantees minimal quality and attention. A senior manager of GTV comments that Feng's TV adaptations of manga enjoy much better sales in overseas markets, particularly Japan, since the Japanese manga has had a certain commercial reputation. By contrast, GTV finds it more difficult to sell original Taiwanese works in the overseas market.

> Overseas marketing demands a shared understanding of this, either book or manga…maybe everyone has read the work and it would have certain degree of market base and familiarity. This

> manga might have been introduced to Asia and many countries…we can imagine what it would be like on screen so that everyone wants to adapt it. If today I want to sell a drama to Japan and South Korea, an original work does not have advantage because it (the market) does not know this work. It would even wonder: is this a story about local Taiwanese people? Is the story very bounded to Taiwanese local sentiment? So it would have low interest and confidence. On the contrary, although an adaptation of manga is limited in terms of the Taiwanese rating for its target audience being too young, it is advantageous in overseas market. (B2, personal communication, Feb 26, 2013, pp.1-2)

In terms of subject-matter, the teenage-girl manga that Fang has adapted into TV dramas are fantasy stories, similar to *Meteor Garden*, addressing teenage-girl market with utopian endings. As I examined previously in chapter 4.1, these adaptations of manga tend to construct a standardised Mandarin setting and be shot in Taiwanese urban space that can communicate with the East Asian audience.

It may be argued that Feng's strategy has had two phases. In the beginning (early 2000s), TV adaptations of manga obtained domestic success easily as the domestic market was less competitive, and regional success too because of the regional spread of Japanese popular culture. In the second phase (in late 2000s until now), Feng's strategy has received smaller domestic success in the Taiwanese TV market as it has had more competitors. Since the SET and other companies have joined the idol drama market, ratings of the TV adaptations of manga that mainly target teenage girls have been lower. The idol drama produced by Feng is regarded as less culturally close to Taiwanese mass audience than that made by SET (B2, personal communication, Feb 26, 2013, p.10). Besides, South Korean TV dramas have created competition (Zhu, 2008, p.91) while the regional influence of Japanese media culture has declined (Otmazgin, 2014). Feng thus has demanded foreign profit which then requires the equipment of regional stardom (see chapter 4.2).

Since 2010, Feng and his Taiwanese broadcaster GTV – an importer of South Korean pop culture and TV drama – started casting more regionally popular South Korean rising stars in their adaptations of manga *My Combat Butler* (2011), *Extravagant Challenge* (2011) and *My Perfect Boyfriend* (2012). The dramas set the South Korean stars in hyper urban spaces alongside Taiwanese idol talents. The synergy of three dramas was beyond their expectation. Initially GTV only promoted them as multinational co-operations, with an export orientation, that targeted regional youngsters (B3, personal communication, Feb 26, 2013, p.10), but they received great attention in the Taiwanese press and were framed as "Taiwanese-Korean Trilogy" by the press (P.-C. Chu, 2011a). Among the three dramas listed above, *Extravagant Challenge* in particular obtained an ideal commercial success (B1, personal communication, Jan 31, 2013, pp.5-6). Feng

and GTV have decided to invite more foreign stars in the future (Hung, 2010b). It suffices to say that Feng's inter-Asian packaging has led him to be more regionally oriented, incorporating more regionally popular cultural elements.

### 5.3.2 Striving for Legitimacy

Feng's adaptation of Japanese manga was once questioned by a number of old Taiwanese TV producers as a backlash towards younger generational Taiwanese consumption of Japanese media in the 1990s, according to him. Feng (2006 cited in M.-J. Lin, 2006b, p.43) responded to the criticism by arguing that "it is too heavy to relate his act with national hatred and antagonism when he was just looking for a good story". Feng further argued that he has "found a way, discovering a new market in which youngsters are willing to tell stories and audiences would watch the dramas happily". Therefore, it is irresponsible to give him a label of "betraying Taiwan" (Feng, 2006 cited in M.-J. Lin, 2006b, p.43). The dispute disappeared when the old generational TV producers went to mainland China and no longer had voice in Taiwanese TV drama industry.

Feng's main competitor in the long term has been SET. Feng has competed with commercial localist projects for time slots, TV ratings and show fee in the Taiwanese idol drama market and beyond. The Feng-GTV coalition and SET have even been considered "rivals" in the idol drama business (Tu, 2015). When *Extravagant Challenge* was aired, Chen I-Chun, senior producer of SET, criticised GTV and Feng as "traitors" because they cast South Korean stars (Choi Si Won and Lee Dong Hae from the South Korean pop idol group Super Junior) as lead actors (Hsiao, 2012).

> Paying South Korean idols to play roles in Taiwanese drama and to be worshiped by Taiwanese audience…instead of nurturing your own artists…sacrifices Taiwanese creativity…and lets South Korean invade the Taiwanese market when the local industry is slightly recovering its strength…Aren't you ashamed of being traitors? (Chen, 2012 cited in Hsiao, 2012)

Whilst SET highlighted its protection of domestic workers, the GTV defended it by noting the marketing advantage of regional casting. The GTV spokesperson said in defence that its production crew members were Taiwanese. GTV (and Jerry Feng) have been operating regionally and have made dramas for both Taiwanese and overseas markets. GTV further noted that Taiwanese people should be happy that Taiwanese dramas attract foreign actors to participate and that GTV is bringing a spotlight to the Taiwanese TV industry. Via South Korean stardom,

Taiwanese idol dramas can go to more overseas markets, and Taiwanese actors can be introduced to these markets (Hsiao, 2012).

> Although we cast Super Junior's (Choi) Si Won and (Lee) Dong Hae to play the male lead characters, the whole production crew is Taiwanese…In the era of the global village, we operate at the pan-Asian market scale. "We do not produce dramas solely for Taiwanese audience but also for overseas world"…People should be happy that Taiwan can attract foreign actors who are willing to come. We do this to promote Taiwan rather than abasing ourselves. (Hsiao, 2012)

Yet taking advantage of the market value of South Korean stars, but assigning them characters that do not show their cultural background, is also a consequence of regional commercial operation that is not agreed on by another voice in idol drama. A few original writers who I contacted also expressed their criticism (S3, personal communication, Jan 25, 2013, p.24; S1, personal communication, Feb 4, 2013, p.20). S3 once worked with Comic International but her contract with the company ended miserably (personal communication, Jan 25, 2013, p.15). As an original creator, S3 does not appreciate Comic International's TV adaptations of manga:

> It (Comic International) always adapts manga into TV dramas because it has purchased the rights of so many mangas to be adapted to TV dramas. I believe that it did not read the mangas carefully. It purchased the rights after browsing the mangas quickly…Since it has bought the rights of so many mangas…it would adapt some of them into TV dramas anyway, even knowing that the market's taste has changed or foreseeing difficulties in the adaptation…because its adaptation rights are expiring soon. It definitely would tell you sounding rhetoric, such as transnational co-operation…If it is able to complete the productions, it would have products to sell in the market, disregarding the quality of the productions. At least it would be better than giving up the rights and not being able to purchase manga rights in the future. (S3, personal communication, Jan 25, 2013, pp.15-16)

S3 further contends that casting the South Korean stars that do not speak Mandarin and need voice actors in the adaptations of manga is a commercial decision, disregard artistic exploration:

> Let's say that Park Shin Hye (a South Korean actress) is cast in a Taiwanese idol drama. Everyone says that she would look weird and her voice dub would sound weird, too, but the production company still insists on the cast. There must be a reason. Usually, it is that investors of the drama want her. …In many situations, actors are cast not because they really fit their characters. (S3, personal communication, Jan 25, 2013, p.24)

S1 echoes S3's argument by commenting that the foreign and trans-media casting does not add points to the aesthetical aspect of the productions:

> We would like (Choi) Si Won and (Lee) Dong Hae (the South Korean pop singers) as singers but we would not necessarily like that when they play in a Taiwanese TV drama, which looks weird, as you would not know whether to perceive them as actors or the South Korean artists. It is a dissonance like a square peg in a round hole. (S1, personal communication, Feb 4, 2013, p.20)

Confronting the question, the head of drama production at GTV defended the decision:

> Many people have questioned us why we are adapting existing (manga) contents, but Japanese stars and South Korean stars would only participate in the adaptations…If you ask the South Korean stars to play an original story, they would say no. They don't have any knowledge about this story and can't assess it. If we give them TV adaptations of manga, they are willing…because this work is already transnational. Maybe they watched the manga when they were young and have a sense of confidence. For them it is a guarantee of quality. (B2, personal communication, Feb 26, 2013, pp.1-2)

GTV defended their strategy by emphasising its economic benefit – the TV adaptations and South Korean cast could help more Taiwanese original works have a better chance of being properly introduced to overseas markets as the adaptations obtain export success (Tu, 2012a). This suffices to say that the Taiwanese commercial TV station must prioritise economic capital over artistic value and local cultural expression.

Answering my question in the interview as to why the production company did not change the cultural background of characters for the foreign actors, the head of drama production at GTV defended the decision, saying that it was a dilemma for commercial production. Every drama has its own characteristics which determine its development. They wanted to reflect the cultural identities of the South Korean actors in the characterisation but Feng's TV dramas are non-specific in their settings so that Koreanising the roles is not a proper arrangement for commercial TV drama making (B2, personal communication, Feb 26, 2013, p.7). The group of Jerry Feng and GTV was aware of the technical issue of foreign casting. In 2014, Feng released his latest inter-Asian drama *Gangster's Bakery*, in which Japanese actress Nagasawa Masami leads the cast. This drama was co-funded by GTV and the PRC-based Hua-Ce Media Company (Li, 2014). It was distributed in the form of DVD by SPO in Japan.[81] This was Feng's first time to actually work with a well-known Japanese actress (S7, personal communication, March 15, 2013, p.6). The lingual issue of foreign casting was addressed as the Japanese actress played a Japanese character and delivered the lines herself. It received good Taiwanese TV ratings and good regional sales in 2014 (Li, 2014; Maple, 2014). Speaking about its vision of the future development of Feng's adaptations of manga, the spokesperson of GTV stated it would act as an open container to house different regional popular elements.

> You may say that we want to be a co-operator. We are unlikely to be a leader. To be a leader, Japan has very fruitful resources and experiences and South Korea also has very strong capacity of cultural integration…our geo-cultural political location is very unique. For instance, Japan is anti-Korean, South Korea is anti-Japanese and mainland China is anti-Japanese and South Korean. Taiwan happens to occupy a good location in between…Our TV drama has a lot of mixing…Our dramas do not show many national traces…We can be mutual…We can be an open container that houses many things. We are like a beautiful entity that accepts everybody. We can combine everybody's resources to make a yummy dish and present it…Everybody benefits. (B3, personal communication, Feb 26, 2013, p.3)

[81] The Japanese website of *Gangster's Bakery* is available at: http://chocolat-t.jp/ [Accessed 20 July 2015].

The statement indicates that GTV, as well as Feng, is developing an inter-Asian packaging style and mastering the skills of making non-national symbolic products that can travel to more countries.

## 5.4 Co-Production with the PRC TV Industry

Apart from the above three packaging strategies that have reached Japanese and South Korean co-operators, many idol drama producers can mainly operate between Taiwan and the PRC, such as producer P3 and the production company for which scriptwriter S6 worked. Among the producers that co-produced idol dramas with the PRC TV companies, Angie Chai is one of the first and regular idol drama producers who co-produced with PRC (W.-J. Yeh, 2007), entering the PRC industry earlier than the other inter-Asian packagers analysed above. Chai (2011 cited in Lin, 2011) has aspired to "to create another success in *Meteor Garden*" that has mesmerised her. To achieve it, her strategy is financial co-production at regional scale:

> The success of *Meteor Garden* has created a network with Asian businesses. We are willing to maintain the network…we manage it on our own, integrating Asian markets and selling dramas to the dealers or TV stations. We maintain good connections with them. (Chai, 2004 cited in Liang, 2004, p.208)

Chai has tried to expand into many overseas markets, such as Japan and PRC, while maintaining her Taiwanese status, as chapter 4.2.2 and 4.2.3 analysed. Yet, her inter-Asian career has much more frequently and gradually been geared towards co-production with PRC TV companies. She co-operated with PRC TV companies for at least eight idol dramas during 2004 and 2012, including *City of Sky* (2004) and *Chrysanthemum's Spring* (2012). The co-operation between her and PRC TV industry has continued until 2016 (*Xinhua Net*, 2016).

Chai's co-operation with the PRC TV industry was driven by the market because the PRC's market size and revenue have been rising rapidly during the development of the idol drama industry in Taiwan, according to EP2, Chai's executive producer (personal communication, Feb 23, 2013, p.4). Chai was probably the most famous idol drama producer from Taiwan in the PRC TV industry during the 2000s (Liang, 2010). She received the fame as "birthmother of idol drama" as the producer of *Meteor Garden*, was regarded as successful producer of idol drama, and attracted most co-operation wishes from PRC (S5, personal communication, Feb 12, 2013, p.36).

Just like most Taiwanese-PRC co-productions, Chai's interactions with the PRC TV industry between 2004 and 2012 can also be divided into two types, as chapter 4.2.2 mentioned. The first

type “Taiwanese-PRC co-production” prioritised Taiwanese market feedback yet started to appeal to PRC market feedback. It mainly appeared between 2005 and 2010 in Chai’s career. She controlled production processes, maintained a high proportion of Taiwanese elements and met PRC’s minimal requests on drama content and elements. Chai’s *City of Sky,* a 2004 work funded by a subsidiary company of PRC’s CCTV, was totally filmed in the PRC (EP2, personal communication, Feb 23, 2013, p.5). We shall see it as an “experiment” in her interactions with the PRC TV. Chai managed to air it in Taiwan in July 2006, more than one year after it was filmed in the PRC (*Apple Daily*, 2006; Yang, 2006). That means the drama had difficulty to find Taiwanese TV stations that were willing to buy it. After the drama, Chai changed her creative strategy. Major settings of her dramas are in Taiwan, instead of PRC. These dramas now have Taiwanese characters who go to the PRC and interact with local characters. This applied to her five PRC-Taiwanese idol dramas: *Silence* (2006), *Corner with Love* (2007), *Sweet Relationship* (2007), *Calling for Love* (2009), and *Hi My Sweetheart* (2010). During this time, Chai had creative control although her power varied according to counterparts. In the making of the dramas, Chai’s company was in a very controlling position. The funding companies from Hong Kong and PRC were smaller TV drama distributors purchasing TV drama show rights (EP2, personal communication, Feb 23, 2013, p.8). One exception was *Calling for Love*, which she co-produced with PRC’s Hunan Broadcasting System’s Satellite TV Channel, one of PRC’s nation-wide TV conglomerates and her creative power was affected. She planned to air it in Taiwan in 2009, earlier than PRC broadcaster received the broadcasting permit from PRC government. The PRC side did not agree to this so that the drama’s Taiwanese broadcast was affected by its PRC broadcast (Yang, 2009b; *Media News*, 2010). In general, during 2005 and 2010, Chai seemingly had higher financial, cultural and symbolic capital overall and was able to narrate from her own point of view.

### 5.4.1 Patriarchal Values and Tastes

The co-productions must go through PRC’s censorship and accept the PRC’s official values and ideologies. PRC government has at least two censoring points in the media-making process: production and distribution licences are issued to each project from the media regulation and control authority in Chinese government, the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television (SARFT), which is under the supervision of the Department of Publicity, the

propaganda division in charge of ideology-related work and media censorship/control in the CCP. Every licence means a censoring gate. In this way, the state makes sure the production and distribution of TV content are all state-approved (Samuels, 2012; Ng, 2015). It may be argued that there is a strong continuum between the state censorship and market censorship. The market censorship of the PRC media distributors internalises the principles of the state censorship, as I will show later in Chai's case. The distributors and their production companies tend to censor their own TV programme projects before the contents are actually sent to governmental censoring bodies.

The PRC media censorship has been frequent, vagarious, unpredictable and it has been tightening (Samuels, 2012; Ng, 2015). PRC officialdom has prevented the state-controlled mass media, media imports and any forms of co-operations from spreading Western values centred on individualism and its derivative cultural and social forms (Keane and Liu, 2013, p.237). The first decade of the 2000s, in which the PRC TV had very active importation of idol dramas, was considered by PRC scholars as an age of "Confucian Revivalism" in the PRC – a period of rapid transformation of the PRC's socio-economic structure (Zhu, 2008, p.95). Confucian Revivalism refers to the cultural policy during the administration of Hu Jintao (2002-2013). The government tried to cultivate its nationals with morally and ethically upright behaviours and more conservative gender codes. In the TV culture, the PRC launched "Clean up the Screen" that included a series of reactive regulations to curb and remove "inappropriate" contents from TV screens (Bai, 2015). The campaign promoted strong patriarchal value. It banned certain subject-matter that was considered harmful to social and moral order, such as materialism, homosexuality, incest, divorce, murder, revenge, love affair, premarital love/sexual relationship and teenage bullying (Bai, 2015; Ng, 2015).

Angie Chai is a prime example for us to enrich our understanding of the complex gender politics in the production side of Taiwanese-PRC co-production beyond the naïve idea of female solidarity as well as the Taiwan-PRC dichotomy. As a female TV producer, Chai did not necessarily resist patriarchal paternalism that centres the PRC state censorship. She said that "TV producers like me convey messages – I always try to create happy moods and right (mainstream) messages" (Chai, 2005 cited in Ma, 2005, p.157). According to writer S5, who has written for Chai, Chai preferred to make fairy-tale stories, especially romantic comedy, and was strongly against showing premarital sex scenes and socio-gender realism. S5 believes that this

has resulted both from Chai's marketing experiences and personal preference. S5 commented that Chai, who was born in 1962, "is a girl forever" – living like a girl and making dramas that are naïve. S5 thinks that a number of elder female idol drama producers, including Chai,

> are more conservative because their experience and background have cultivated them this way…They seem to believe that women should be "spotless, clean and pure", better remain as virgins before marriage…Most of the experienced individuals who are bosses today all think in this way. They are all much more conservative. Their ideas and value systems stay in the last century. (S5, personal communication, Feb 12, 2013, p.18)

Chai is a good romantic comedy producer. Chai's executive producer EP2 commented romantic comedy as Chai's speciality:

> She is very good…in making comedy…she thinks that life is very painful…she would feel very sad when she watches a tragedy. She does not like such genre. Besides, she turned to drama making from variety show. She has a comedic personality. (EP2, personal communication, Feb 23, 2013, p.17)

This is evident in her selection of *Meteor Garden* and its following success. Romantic comedy has become an important strategy in Chai's inter-Asian trajectory.

The creative workers working with Chai have to negotiate with and usually conform to her more conservative and escapist principles. The suppression of realism was illustrated in the pairing between Chai and S1 and S2, who worked with Chai from 2002 to 2006. S1 and S2 had to create romantic love stories, preferred by Chai, who believes that most audiences do not like to see miserable scenes and social issues on TV:

> When I worked with Chai, she actually gave me many frames...The frames referred to some plots that Chai particularly preferred very much and some plots that she did not like at all. She very much liked romantic and more naïve plots. With regard to realistic plots, she thought that the audience did not like to watch that. This is her personal preference. (S1, personal communication, Feb 4, 2013, pp.21-22)

An interesting question is where Chai and PRC TV market's social cultural value boundaries were? We can answer the question by going back to S1 and S2. Knowing the primary orientation of Chai's company, S1 and S2, who preferred more observational realistic stories, tried to satisfy the producer while at the same time obeying their own creative orientation in their negotiation for more personal inputs (S2, personal communication, Feb 4, 2013, p.4). They tried to create more realistic characters in light-atmosphere stories so as not to discourage Chai. In 2005, several months before *Silence* started shooting, Chai came to S1 and S2 for a story tailored for three star actors Chai contracted. I will have more discussion about the cast in chapter 6.1. Chai asked S1 and S2 to copy the regionally successful South Korean romantic comedy *Full House* but the writers were more inspired by another less popular South Korean drama *I Am Sorry I Love You* that involves murder, revenge and other dark sides of humanity (S1 and S2, personal

communication, Feb 4, 2013, p.6).[82] S1 and S2 developed the initial version of *Silence* that had a heroine taking revenge on a dysfunctional rich family whose patriarch murders her father. They constructed a young heir and his manic-depressive mother in the rich family due to their interest in the vulnerability of the rich. Chai objected to the design of the mother, claiming that their audiences do not want to watch a manic-depressive. But S1 and S2 insisted on keeping the depressive mother in the story. Surprisingly, they won in the negotiation mainly because the project was in a crazy rush. If Chai kept saying no, S1 and S2 would have left and Chai would have failed the whole project. Chai was forced to agree to this part in their story, accepting both the dysfunctional family and the vengeful heroine (S1 and S2, personal communication, Feb 4, 2013, p.22).

Although S1 and S2 luckily passed Chai's own censor, they were caught by the internal censors from a PRC co-financier who faced official censorship. Their vengeful heroine was not allowed on PRC TV. Chai did not defend for them and instead asked S1 and S2 to resolve the problem on their own. They compromised and softened the story by turning the would-be thriller into a "healthier" love story, because the whole production team could not afford any delays and vetoes (S1 and S2, personal communication, Feb 4, 2013, pp.6-7).

The inter-Asian contestation in the linkage built by Chai appeared vertically between the PRC funder that suppressed alternative ideas about women's behaviour at that time and the Taiwanese writers that wanted darker characters, as chapter 2 indicates. The key point that I want to make here is that the negotiation did not directly take place along the national difference between the people. It was actually happening between the Taiwanese personnel. Chai as a more senior woman seemingly had internalised and reproduced the dominant patriarchal ideas in the mass media. She did not advocate more aggressive ideas about women. Moreover, as the interface, Chai did not naturally resist the request from the PRC side. She did not stand with the writers simply because she is Taiwanese. Instead, she tilted to and administered the request from the PRC funder. The Taiwanese writers negotiated with the commands from foreign funders via Chai.

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[82] In 2004 and 2005, the most phenomenal urban modern TV drama in Chinese-speaking countries was possibly the South Korean TV drama *Full House* (2004) that many Taiwanese idol dramas wanted to copy. The romantic comedy was very successful in Taiwan, the PRC and beyond. It revolves around the romantic engagement between a fictional South Korean pop star and a young woman with whom he shares a house (*KKNEWS*, 2016).

### 5.4.2 Avoid Offending PRC's Political Discourse

The PRC regulates the world view, political facts and historiography of TV dramas. It bans its newspapers and TV from reporting on or mentioning the ROC based in Taiwan, or its activities, be it the KMT or the DPP, and suppresses the Taiwanese independent movement (Tsai, 2007, pp.138-139). The PRC also bans any performing activities of "pro-independence Taiwanese performers and media workers" who do not follow its ideologies and regulations and even challenge them.[83] Any representations of film and TV that operate within the PRC media system have to follow the PRC's official discourse of Taiwan being a province of the PRC and consequent rules for naming. On the Internet, a document that was allegedly issued from official news agency of PRC illustrates how to script and write for PRC media (Scripting Community, 2014). According to the document, firstly, it is forbidden to say that people from Taiwan travel to "China". It may be said that they go to the "mainland" or "inland". Secondly, it is not allowed to call Taiwan and China as "liang an (meaning 'two places across the Taiwan Strait')", which suggests equal political status of the two places. Thirdly, it is forbidden to refer to Taiwan in equal place with "China", such as "China-Taiwan" relations. It may be used in ways such as "mainland-Taiwan" or "Fujian (Province)-Taiwan". Fourthly, "Taiwan" is a concept opposite to "(zuguo) da lu [(ancestral national) mainland]". All of these political terms indicate that "Taiwan" is not an equivalent country to "China". The fifth is that any reference to the ROC government's activities should be in quotation marks. On the other side, Taiwanese government does not accept the PRC discourse and naming. To oppose PRC's official naming, KMT and DPP have used several terms for the PRC since 1990s, such as "da lu", which has usually been translated as "mainland" in English, and "zhong guo [China]" (Chang and Holt, 2015). Their naming has largely determined how ordinary Taiwanese name the PRC. Thus, Taiwanese media that has any terms following PRC's naming would be disliked in Taiwan by particular groups. The most visible example is that some

[83] The PRC government allegedly has a list of pro-independence performers, the existence of which the government never officially admits, but information about its existence has circulated on the Internet (Tsai, 2007, pp.138-139). Taiwanese pop singer Chang Hui Mei, aka A-Mei, was banned from performing in China for the following few years because of her performance at the presidential inauguration of DPP-affiliated Chen Shui-Bian of the government of the ROC. The self-surveillance of people has caused a chilling effect in Taiwanese show business. Since the A-Mei incident, Taiwanese artists or media workers rarely declare their political stance (Tsai, 2005, p.101; 2007).

Taiwanese individuals as well as politicians publicly protested against the use of “nei di [inland]” in Taiwanese media (Shih and Chen, 2010).[84]

Nevertheless, Taiwanese people and media business working outside Taiwan, especially in the PRC, are subordinate to the PRC discourse rather than those of the KMT and DPP. To cope with the political controversy, the idol drama industry has been mainly avoiding political discussion and insinuation, too. The industry has articulated the powers in a way that is similar to the “choric mode of articulation” coined by Horace M. Newcomb and Robert S. Alley (1983, p.31). Choric mode refers to a text that “sings in resonance with mainstream heterogeneous ideologies” whilst lyric mode “stands out from, and negotiates with the mainstream in a personal voice” (Ma, 1999, p.120). A choric articulation is esoteric with the mainstream preferences on its surface, but it can still generate polysemic interpretations and meanings, possibly on the audience side. Choric mode contrasts with lyric mode to form a continuum on which commercial TV and non-commercial TV are located. Lyric mode of voice does not compromise. It publicly opposes mainstream ideas. Commercial TV can have lyric elements whilst non-commercial TV might have choric texts. The general thrust of commercial TV nevertheless is choric and that of public TV lyric. The Taiwanese industry responds ambiguously to the political hegemony of the PRC and does not clearly resist it. Taiwanese idol drama workers have produced polysemic texts whose meanings cannot solely be defined by or submit to one particular nationalist or nation-state. Such tactics can be called “polysemic articulation” – the production of polysemic words and texts that allow the existence of multiple interpretations. Chai’s productions have used a city instead of a country to identify its characters in the lines to produce polysemic texts. Only the names of the two backdrop cities, such as Taipei and Beijing, would be noted in dramas. Doing so leaves interpretations open to all audiences in the two ideologically contradictory societies and beyond. Those who accept the PRC discourse and those accepting Taiwanese DPP or KMT discourse may interpret the meaning of a particular text on their own.

Polysemic interpretation also appears during the interaction between the PRC funders and Taiwanese creators. Writer S3 told me that her PRC funder interpreted, from the PRC nationalist discursive position, a scene of her TV drama aired in 2009 when the Taiwanese protagonist drank

[84] The explanation of the difference of these terms are available at: http://www.ettoday.net/news/20130902/264884.htm [Accessed 4 April 2016] and at: http://smvv0206.pixnet.net/blog/post/5581866 [Accessed 4 April 2016].

Starbucks coffee in Shanghai: “When the PRC funders were reviewing the script to decide if they would invest in it, the funders’ viewpoint was that ‘see! Taiwan has Starbucks! Shanghai has Starbucks! We are a family! We live in the similar way!’”. These managers did not know that S3 was intending to talk about the globalisation of Western culture in Taiwan and the PRC. The managers mainly interpreted the script from a PRC nationalist’s viewpoint. S3 did not refute the managers because she knew that this interpretation was from their own ideological standpoint which saw S3’s script as a text conveying the message that “the two places are family” as their new generations drank the same coffee from Starbucks (S3, personal communication, Jan 25, 2013, p.5).

### 5.4.3 Domestication, Prioritising the PRC and the Loss of Legitimacy

Nonetheless, PRC TV companies have had strong motivations to “domesticate” projects from Chai as well as other Taiwanese producers, completely buy them out and then replace the Taiwanese elements and world view with PRC ones.

The PRC side can either reject TV dramas that involve cross-Strait (Taiwan Strait) historical representations and pursue PRC funding and shooting co-operation, if it disagrees with the historiography of the dramas, or purchase them to change the stories, if it thinks the dramas can be profitable in the PRC with some modifications. Taiwanese producer-director Tsao Jui-Yuan, who had pursued PRC funding for his historical drama *A Touch of Green* (2015), which was adapted from Pai Hsien-Yung’s same-name novel and set in the historical moment of mainland China and Taiwan before and after the Civil War, commented on PRC funders being able to fund them 100% yet requesting script change to meet the PRC ideology (Tsao, 2015 cited in Fanily, 2015).

An urban romantic love story that does not contradict with PRC historiography and world view, which is Chai’s specialty, still can cause commercial conflicts over revenue. The PRC and Taiwanese sides do not share revenues from all markets – Instead, the PRC gets only PRC market rights whilst Taiwan gets overseas market rights including Taiwanese rights (P.-C. Chu, 2011b; B1, personal communication, Jan 31, 2013, p.8; Hung, 2014b; Tsao, 2015 cited in Fanily, 2015). This is a convention of financing for Taiwanese-PRC TV drama co-production – the PRC funder is in charge of PRC market whilst the Taiwanese funder in charge of non-PRC area, in order to save the time spent for making decision jointly and avoid extra cost in distributing profits

from all markets (B1, personal communication, Jan 31, 2013, p.8). Taiwanese-PRC co-production that Chai adopts sounds ideal for the Taiwanese idol drama producers. Its key problem also lies in the uneven distribution of profit between the partners as one partner's acts to maximise profit could jeopardise the profit of another and cause conflicts between the two.

The first conflict is about broadcasting time. Both sides would want to maximise their interests and profit in their own markets by finding the best broadcasting time slot for their co-produced dramas. Nonetheless, the two TV systems have different ecologies, in which Taiwanese TV have aired idol drama one episode for per week while PRC TV on a daily basis so that to air an idol drama at the same time on both sides has been difficult. When a Taiwanese TV station airs first, PRC's revenue would be jeopardised by piracy and vice versa, due to the circulation of these dramas on the Internet (Chen and Chen, 2011).

Also, in PRC, pure domestic productions have better broadcasting privilege than co-produced dramas. To maximise interests, PRC co-producing companies would want to domesticate the projects if they can afford them:

> It (PRC) protects its domestic industries so that prime-time slot at 8pm only broadcasts domestic productions. Co-produced TV dramas can only be broadcast in specific time slots…with a number of restrictions. Thus they (PRC funders) would try to get what they want …the PRC funders definitely want the drama projects to become "domestic productions" so that the channels and broadcasting time that these projects could get are better (than when they are categorised as "co-produced TV dramas"). But Taiwanese issue is that I would have received Taiwanese government's subsidy for high definition dramas…which requests PRC funding not exceeding 51%. Would the two sides fight? The outcome of the fight would be that PRC funders would say that…You give up the subsidy and I cover the whole production expense. You give the whole project to me! Let's make it a "PRC domestic production". (S3, personal communication, Jan 25, 2013, pp.16-17)

The third issue that must be taken into account is cultural resonance. Both sides aim to maximise popular and local elements in the dramas to appeal to their own targeted markets. The PRC co-financiers would ask the dramas to change the location from Taipei to Chinese cities as well as adding more domestic actors in order to win a better broadcasting time slot in PRC TV channels. One drama being taken over for this reason was *Love at Aegean Sea* (2004), a TV drama project carried out by a Taiwanese company and written by a Taiwanese TV writer, S6, in 2002. It was equally invested in by both Taiwanese and the PRC companies and was aired in Taiwan on CTS in 2004 (S6, personal communication, Jan 23, 2013, pp.2-3). The drama is about an urban love triangle that features the scenery of the Aegean Sea and beautiful actors. The major production difficulty was the lack of funding for shooting in Greece. To cover the production budget and make a name in the TV market, the project asked for PRC funding. However, the

PRC co-financiers asked the team to change the location from Taipei to Shanghai. The production company agreed. S6 was asked to not only change location but also avoid mentioning any particular local features in Shanghai in order to attract a Taiwanese audience by keeping it temporally and spatially generic (S6, personal communication, Jan 23, 2013, p.6). Recalling her writing experience for the drama in my interview, S6 responded with unhappiness and complaint:

> When I was informed that the project became a co-production…the Shanghai part had much difficulty. If it were just a Taipei story, the dialogue would have been like this: "let's meet up on Chung Hsiao East Road".[85] But when we had Chinese funding, we must consider the resonance of mainland China and Taiwan. This was a problem…Some TV critics (of Taiwan) mentioned about the problem of the locality. We did not appeal to both sides well. The CTS felt that it was set in Shanghai. The mainland partner simply considered it a Shanghai story. Actually we did not particularly emphasise which background it was in. We were sort of shunning the issue of locality but these issues are unavoidable. We did not want to mention the geo-regional aspect…The company thought that since we shot in the mainland (China), we should not highlight the Chinese shooting…We did not highlight any places in Shanghai. The company worried that the Taiwanese regarded it as a foreign drama in the Taiwanese release. But in fact it was no use. Taiwanese considered it an "import buy" but we were an initiated-by-Taiwan project. (S6, personal communication, Jan 23, 2013, p.6)

For those Taiwanese producers who input great effort into their projects and care about the outcomes, their control power over the projects depends on their ownership and whether they can raise money from the market that would favour them – usually their home market or any other non-PRC market – so as to balance the power from the PRC funder. The Taiwanese side must fund more than 50% of the production budget to take control as a 50-50 structure would not secure control power. A 50-50 or 33-33-33 joint venture would put the co-funding parties in a tug of war that delays production (EP1, personal communication, July 24, 2013, p.5). If Taiwanese producers can no longer cover more than half of the production budget and ownership, they lose creative control to PRC TV companies. Yet, most of the Taiwanese TV productions seek PRC funding exactly because they cannot raise the full amount of money required for them from Taiwan. Even Chai admits that "the production budget from Taiwanese TV stations only accounts for one fourth of production expense, the rest of which must be recouped from overseas revenue" (Chai, 2012 cited in Chao, 2012). Consequently, the PRC TV companies take over the projects with the result that Chai and other Taiwanese TV producers become just commissioned executive producers (Huang, 2010).

Facing the funding and creative taking over, Chai and other Taiwanese TV drama workers responded differently according to their input in terms of effort and ego, with regard to the loss of

[85] Chung Hsiao East Road is an avenue full of shopping spaces for clothes, cosmetics, etc. in Taipei. It is a Taipei equivalence of the Oxford Street of London, UK.

creative control. Those who have devoted themselves to and care very much about their own visions of the projects would be more upset. For example, a serious deprivation of authorship – an extreme alienation between artist and artwork – took place and the story developer's right to the story was abridged. S1 developed a 30-episode story about Republican China (the period when the ROC government owned the sovereignty in mainland China during 1912 and 1949) around 2007 and proposed this project to Chai's production company. Chai agreed to take it and started looking for co-producing PRC companies that would be co-financiers, local line producers and local distributors. When S1 finished the script, the PRC funding body asked her to revise the whole script. The drama project proceeded but S1 gave up her ownership of the script rights (EP2, personal communication, Feb 23, 2013, pp.6-7). Describing the experience as "miserable" and "painful", S1 (personal communication, Feb 4, 2013, p.22) has gradually realised the creative difference between her and Chai and has not co-worked with Chai since.

The controversial co-production with PRC that Chai and other Taiwanese TV producers adopted triggered cultural opposition from other people inside the industry. The criticism was centred by difficulties in production and failures in markets. Behind these commercial problems were various differences between Taiwan and PRC that are highly irreconcilable. S3 criticises that a Taiwanese-PRC co-production that tries to satisfy both Taiwanese and PRC demands will only create something that is "neither fish nor fowl" (S3, personal communication, Jan 25, 2013, pp.16-17). That means that the product has neither a PRC nor Taiwanese viewpoint. It is inconsistent and conflicting in its message and is difficult for audience. Now as head of her own production company, S1 objects to the strategy. Echoing S3, S1 points out the difficulty to articulate the requests from both Taiwan and PRC for Taiwanese idol drama and the lack of clear message in the content:

> Based on my participation experience of these co-produced dramas, I deeply feel that when a drama wants to sell in both Taiwan and mainland China, it is doomed. It will never work…When I think that I want to attract cross-Strait or transnational audiences, it is easy to "aim too high but accomplish little because of little talent". You cannot handle a lot of issues! You just want to include every element! You would lack clear central spirit. (S1, personal communication, Feb 4, 2013, p.18)

Such a strategy largely leads to market failures in Taiwan. The co-production projects initiated by Taiwanese TV companies have usually been commercial failures in the Taiwanese market, due mainly to their prioritisation of mainland Chinese demand and world view (*Want Daily*, 2012). This explains why the number of co-produced dramas dwindled from eight in 2009 to three in 2011

(*Want Daily*, 2012). Chai stated that she had no positive views on the prospect of these Taiwanese-Chinese co-funding productions overall (Huang, 2010; *Want Daily*, 2012). Since the Taiwanese-PRC co-funded and co-produced dramas targeting both markets bear little fruit in the Taiwanese TV market, recently Chai and other Taiwanese TV producers prioritised the PRC market over the Taiwanese market (Huang, 2010). Chai's 2012 work *Chrysanthemum's Spring* was funded by Shenzhen Broadcasting System and it targeted the PRC market and was set mainly in Shenzhen, PRC (*China News*, 2012; *Shenzhen Business News*, 2012). This can be called "PRC domestic production": Chai would assemble Taiwanese writers and directors to produce dramas that are made for PRC TV stations and companies and completely give up on broadcasting them in Taiwan (Huang, 2010). Chai is not the only producer who is doing this. Many Taiwanese TV drama producers have been like Chai, making TV dramas for PRC TV companies as a subcontractor (Huang, 2010).

### 5.4.4 Changing Work Schema towards PRC Co-production

According to S2 (personal communication, Feb 4, 2013, p.28), the TV dramas he wrote purely for the PRC have seldom obtained good TV ratings in Taiwan. But he does not resist the strategy personally. The key is that he has a different work schema with it – he considers these PRC projects something he does mainly for a living, for the financial imperative.

> Simply speaking, I am making money from the PRC projects...The PRC market can offer me better income. (S2, personal communication, Feb 4, 2013, p.28)

To achieve commercial success, S2 usually follows a formula in the creation process, because he as a Taiwanese writer could not produce stories that capture PRC social pulses. S2 could not input too much ego into the PRC projects, either.

> The stories that I write for it (PRC market) would be safer. I might not be able to write stories rooted in the PRC's domestic sentiments so I reproduce dramas thematising family conflicts. I cannot make them very emotionally touching. (S2, personal communication, Feb 4, 2013, p.28)

These commercial productions could deliver fairly standardised urban stories that do not point to any particular locality or delve into the complex historical and cultural connections between the PRC and Taiwan. The narratives disembedded themselves not in a displacement fashion, such as Taiwanese working and travelling to the PRC – instead, they are stories that do not root in either particular PRC or Taiwanese social-historical realities (Mao, 2012 cited in Y. Lin, 2012). They also could remake existing successful dramas. Chai's *Chrysanthemum's Spring* was

adapted from a regionally successful South Korean TV drama *Pure in My Heart* (2006) (*China News*, 2012). The PRC TV drama projects that tend to be more formulaic and commercially safer are the main source of income for Taiwanese TV workers.

It may be argued that S2 has different schema and thus does not reject the strategy. In the new strategy in his wish, Taiwanese local productions that mainly target Taiwanese market are the important part where he realises his creativity. S2 could realise creativity better in Taiwanese projects than in PRC projects:

> I write stories that touch me deeply for Taiwanese projects because I grew up here. (S2, personal communication, Feb 4, 2013, p.28)

S2 hoped to contribute Taiwanese productions with his own visions as he grew up in Taiwan. The answer shows the separation of the works for Taiwan from those works mainly for PRC has emerged as a new work schema for Taiwanese TV creators in their negotiation with PRC co-production.

S1 also does not give up on writing stories with a Taiwanese world view. S1 further argues that dramas prioritising Taiwanese market feedback and depicting Taiwanese characters could be economically feasible:

> I tell a good story that only revolves around this place – the story has just a man and a woman living in Taipei. It can also be popular in mainland China because humans can empathise with each other. (S1, personal communication, Feb 4, 2013, p.18)

Previously hurt from the direct and indirect suppression of PRC funders and Chai, S1 also needs to work for PRC domestic productions. She has a very different schema as she views it as a money making exercise, more specifically to supplement her fee in producing Taiwanese TV drama, in case the Taiwanese drama could not return cost immediately:

> Producing (good) dramas in Taiwanese TV (will require more money than the domestic platform can cover)... We will be in debt. Thus we have to work for PRC TV to make money. (S1, personal communication, Feb 4, 2013, p.28)

Such separation is also taken by S3. S3 also maintains that a project initiated by a Taiwanese producer must decide on one primary market in their inter-Asian packaging: either Taiwan or the PRC; she believes that a project made by a Taiwanese company should prioritise Taiwanese market demand and it should stop self-censoring for PRC's values and preference (S3, personal communication, Jan 25, 2013, pp.16-17). If she needs to compromise the PRC's regulation, she could have worked for projects that target the PRC and give her four times the pay that a Taiwanese project could give. She does not want to work for a Taiwanese project that not only

gives her low payment but also self-censors for the PRC market (S3, personal communication, Jan 25, 2013, p.17).

Overall, the PRC-Taiwanese co-productions represented by Chai have aimed for commercial purpose. Cultural negotiation and contestation takes place inside Taiwanese team, rather than between Taiwanese and PRC sides. The gender value of Chai was more similar with that of PRC. They together suppressed more progressive ideas suggested by junior Taiwanese TV workers. It also has been articulating political stances ambiguously in the background.

We have witnessed a transition of market priority in the development of the strategy. In the beginning, Taiwanese TV producers prioritised the Taiwanese market and passively incorporated PRC elements. But when the Taiwanese TV industry started encountering funding difficulty in Taiwan, they were not able to maintain their creative control in the administration of production. Eventually, the PRC took over control. Making one idol drama for both the PRC and Taiwanese markets is becoming less feasible for these Taiwanese TV stations and production companies. The PRC productions have fulfilled the commercial imperatives of Taiwanese TV workers but not the cultural imperatives of these workers, audiences and society in Taiwan. The new model of business demanded by a bottom-up and junior industrial voice is a product targeting a specific national market. However, the Taiwanese TV drama industry is crossing over to the PRC for financial reasons, making a living or covering the expense of a Taiwanese project that is made for personal expression and maybe a Taiwanese audience.

## 5.5 Conclusion

Money-making – the accumulation of economic capital – is the primary interest of the commercial TV drama industry. Yet the producers in the commercial system are on a continuum that poles between short-term and long-term commercialism. Long-term commercialism would be aware of the significance of accumulating cultural, symbolic and social capital – crafting skills, mastering different commercial genres, winning recognition and making production connections. This is the reason that a few Taiwanese producers opened their own personal companies and took advantage of regional markets. In the declining Taiwanese TV market, the easiest commercial model is commercial localism relying on low-cost and standardised productions and targeting a smaller local TV market. It prioritises short-term and constant accumulation of economic capital

over creative advance. Those who are more concerned about personal expression, professional reputation and prestige (symbolic capital), and production know-how and skills (cultural capital), have taken advantage of overseas markets and foreign resources. They have worked on their own to get away with budgetary constraints to make significant progress.

This chapter examines the strategies of four Taiwanese inter-Asian packagings in idol drama industry. Different production companies have different orientations, styles and schemata, and their leaders have developed production strategies and made inter-Asian connections actively and voluntarily based on their own personalities, creative styles, work history, connections, their future vision concerning idol dramas, and imaginations about audience. The diversification of their trajectories marks the particularity of the Taiwanese idol drama industry's inter-Asian experiences. These inter-Asian packagers have contributed to the diversification and heterogeneity of Taiwanese TV drama. Taiwanese idol drama industry has been capable of producing more dramas than by itself due to resources and fundings from other countries.

Compared to the production of commercial localist dramas that prioritises guarding the domestic market, inter-Asian packaging can be really risky because of the uncertain, dynamic and competitive regional and domestic markets. Not all of the packagers have succeeded in making a profit or continued to accumulate money. The common situation is that they would gain money for one drama and lose what they earned in the next project. Thus they must continuously seek investment.

Virginia Liu seized the chance to conduct inter-Asian connections and obtain the knowledge of inter-Asian co-operation and critical acclaim. Prioritising personal expression and challenging socio-cultural issues can be risky and lead to financial loss. Liu's TV dramas that commit to her own personal expression have obtained little commercial success. Tsai Yueh-Hsun has mastered his production skills and succeeded in obtaining money, recognition, reputation and knowledge of making diverse types of commercial genres. Standing apart from more expressive producers, Tsai has balanced well between commercial profit and professional recognition in his dramas. The two packagers' TV dramas have been recognised as quality dramas since the 2000s and recognition is evident in that the TBS aired Liu and Tsai's *Home* (2012) and *Black and White* (2009).

The four strategies have all expanded their inter-Asian connections. Angie Chai has secured connections and economic investment in the PRC market. Jerry Feng is expanding into the

Japanese market. Feng keeps making teen dramas adapted from Japanese manga, is gradually receiving Japanese attention and deepening his connection with Japanese media. Inter-Asian packaging can also be as standardised and formulaic as commercial localism, especially the PRC co-productions. Chai, who believes that audiences only like to watch funny romantic comedy for escape, continues to brush up her signature style in her co-operations with PRC TV.

Their strategies have marked their advantages and disadvantages in market. These inter-Asian dramas do not appeal to local Taiwanese audiences with local sentiments and values. Instead they compete more in the Taiwanese market and regional markets with regionally-shared elements. Their productions require money more than their home market can cover. Moreover, as the idol drama packagers not only target the Taiwanese market but also aspire for overseas exports, they need to deal with more diverse political and economic powers in the region, implying that their dramas are subject to political and ideological pressures coming from different areas in the region. The tendency is that they accept rules in their target markets. All commercial productions do not challenge the political discourse of the PRC and other East Asian national sentiments. Some inter-Asian packagers, such as Virginia Liu, have tried to reconcile cultural and national differences in their narratives and have obtained complex textual outcomes. Some would just avoid touching national and cultural issues, such as Jerry Feng and Tsai Yueh-Hsun, for different motives.

The first inter-Asian contestations occur indirectly and horizontally as competitions between the production companies and individuals, especially between inter-Asian packagers and SET's commercial localism. Although they also compete for viewership overall, they are similar in term of regional operation. The four inter-Asian packagers do not treat each other as primary competitors. Competing with the SET, the inter-Asian commercial operation modes have strived for economic and cultural legitimation and called for identification in Taiwan. Virginia Liu's TV dramas have hardly earned high viewership in Taiwan and been commercial failures. Both PRC co-productions and TV adaptations of manga have been involved in such types of politics for cultural legitimation. GTV and Jerry Feng have been attacked by SET for their casting of foreign actors for lead roles. The GTV-Feng group has chosen to defend itself by discoursing its contribution and loyalty to Taiwanese TV industry. As covered in chapter 4, idol drama business associates itself with Taiwan for its place-based production, whereas TV adaptations of manga with moderate foreign casts might obtain legitimation more easily than the PRC co-productions

that are not filmed in Taiwan. The production strategy of Tsai Yueh-Hsun also obtains legitimation for its economic contribution (casting Taiwanese talents, shooting in Taiwan and presenting Taiwan's modern aspects) and thematic resonance to Taiwanese social reality.

The creative differences between packaging team members, packagers and foreign co-operators formed vertical and hierarchical inter-Asian contestations. Angie Chai's scriptwriters were often constrained by her supervision which was influenced by her own taste and marketing decisions. Yet Virginia Liu experienced and negotiated the cultural difference mainly by herself. Since the Taiwanese market recession has continued, more affluent PRC TV companies have taken control of the inter-Asian projects jointly funded by Taiwanese and PRC TV stations and companies, deprived Taiwanese producers of control, and harmed the Taiwanese market feedback. More recently, making TV dramas for the PRC has become an efficient way to accrue economic capital. The PRC-Taiwanese works are geared to the PRC market. The type of packaging that raises funds from and appeals to Taiwanese and PRC markets are no longer workable. The dramas shot in the PRC have no emotional and spatial connection to Taiwanese society and are not welcomed by Taiwanese audiences. Commercial Taiwanese TV workers go to the PRC market for a living. Some of the producers earn money from the PRC, which may be used to cover the expenses of the realisation of their own visions.

This chapter suggests the co-existence of multiple packaging strategies of Taiwanese idol drama making. The heterogeneity of Taiwanese idol drama is formed of and maintained by the packagers who connect to regional allies. In comparison, the non-Taiwanese countries seem to have relatively homogeneous national characteristics and behaviours when they interact with Taiwanese inter-Asian packagers. The heterogeneity of production strategies in the field of idol drama is roughly homologous with larger Taiwanese political culture: localist cultural movement, pan-Chinese universalism and cross-cultural inter-Asianism, the heterogeneity of which is also characterised by the connection of Taiwanese factions with particular foreign forces. But the idol drama culture has relative autonomy from politics. PRC co-production, narrative inter-Asian drama, global culture making and TV adaptation of manga alongside commercial localism, are five production strategies. The strategies are connected to producers' own personalities, work history, connections, future vision and imaginations about audiences, which may be influenced by the social categories (ethnicity, gender, generation and class) in Taiwanese society. Their polemic contestations concern legitimacy between strategies advocating localism vs inter-Asian

regionalism, low-cost standardisation vs technological advance, and finally, personal expression vs market demands.

It is crucial to note that the heterogeneity of Taiwanese inter-Asian packaging is also related to and largely determined by the Taiwanese connections with particular foreign forces. Therefore, the next chapter will be dedicated to analysing how foreign markets and forces influence the text of Taiwanese inter-Asian packaged idol drama. It will focus on the various representations of Taiwanese individuals in the dramas in relation to the co-operating East Asian counterparts involved.

# Chapter 6 Inter-Asian Imaginations

This chapter shifts attention to the contents in idol dramas. It analyses the imaginations in the idol dramas that struggled to enter markets in the PRC, Japan and South Korea. It explores the ways that these inter-Asian TV dramas have presented the Taiwanese in relation to people from these three countries and manifested the intentions of the inter-Asian packagers in the idol dramas. Chapter 2 states that there are two forms of articulation that connect two elements together: one from a powerful position and one from a subordinate position (Laclau, 1977; Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; 2014; Hall, 1986a; Chen, 1998; 2010). The chapter will show that as the above three markets are economically important to idol dramas, the imaginations in idol dramas articulate elements of the three countries and Taiwan, from a weaker position (since Taiwanese media and the Taiwanese are less powerful than the other three countries). Whilst the articulation of the powerful position would be a "structure in dominance", articulation coming from the weak, e.g. the (ex-) colonised, might also be complicit to and identify with the dominant structure, thus reinforcing the structure in dominance. As "little subjectivity", Taiwanese contemporary cultural formation is full of identifications with the dominant value systems of "larger civilisations", capitalism and heterosexual patriarchy, rather than critical identification with various minor identities (e.g. women, homosexuals, the working class, former colonies) (Chen, 1998; 2010).

This chapter will analyse to what degree idol dramas are critical of or conform to dominant forces in East Asia. At media production level, critical scholars have identified that art-house films have resisted the hegemonic forces of patriarchal nationalist and capitalist and its value systems, whilst mainstream commercial media tend to be articulated and complicit with the forces (Hall, 1982; 1986a; Shih, 2007, p.35). Still, the commercial media field is full of heterogeneous works. As I am interested in the development of criticality in idol drama and how the diverse ways of inter-Asian packaging could bring a critical edge, I will analyse different articulations in the chosen idol dramas that link to different countries. Comparing these imaginations helps to pinpoint the different, heterogeneous and even contradictory cultural imaginations of Taiwan (and being Taiwanese) that are structurally similar to the political and cultural fragmentation of the country.

Before I explore imaginations in idol dramas that have elements from the PRC, Japan and South Korea, noting how "global Taiwan" in East Asia and beyond has been generally envisioned in idol dramas would serve as a useful ground for us to understand more clearly the particularity

of the imaginations analysed in the chapter. Such effort will demonstrate how certain East Asian countries have become (more) significant in Taiwanese envisioning. To begin with, the idol dramas that do not have particular marketing considerations towards other East Asian markets would primarily address the dominant ideology and value system of post-Sino-centric Taiwanese society. To recap chapter 1, post-Sino-centric Taiwan has encouraged "transnational civil consciousness" whilst marginalising Sino-centrism (Tu, 1996; Shih, 2003, p.146; Chang, 2010, pp.110-111). Yet it has developed a hierarchical world view that is composed, first, of those who have dominated Taiwan (West Europe, North America and the economically superior East Asian countries) and second, those that the Taiwanese have dominated, including marginalised indigenous people in Taiwan, South East Asian migrant workers and female marital immigrants from the PRC, South East Asia/Vietnam, etc. (Lei, 2009, pp.422-425; Chen, 2010, p.35; F.-c. I. Yang, 2013, pp.1083-1086). The Taiwanese have an occidental myth that the West is more advanced in general (Lei, 2009). Also, cultural products and commodities from "white" East Asian countries like Japan and South Korea are desired by contemporary Taiwanese urban dwellers (Ko, 2004; Huang, 2011, pp.7-8).

The hierarchy is indirectly displayed in idol dramas. Western elements appear along with the upward movements of the dramas' protagonists, travelling, studying and sojourning in the West. Although Taiwanese media may hope to shoot in the West, most of them cannot afford the expenses of shooting in distant Western countries (S6, personal communication, Jan 23, 2013, p.3). Only a few idol dramas, most of which were Taiwanese-PRC co-productions, have been shot in Western cities, mainly London and Paris. These cases include *Meteor Garden*'s sequel (2002), *Amor de Tarapaca* (2004), *Love at Aegean Sea* (2004), *Emerald on the Roof* (2006), *Dreams Link* (2007), *Material Queen* (2011) and *Queen of SOP* (2012).[86]

Globalised tourist spaces in more geographically proximate South East and East Asia have also appeared in the idol dramas, for instance, the PRC (Tianjin, Qingdao and Shanghai), Singapore, Vietnam (Ha Long Bay), Philippines (Boracay Island), Thailand (Phuket Island), South Korea (Seoul) and Japan (Hokkaido, Kagawa and Ehime). The idol dramas have presented South

[86]For my interest in Taiwanese TV industry, I usually watch the first few episodes of idol dramas so as to have a basic understanding of them. I watched the idol dramas mentioned here and found out that they filmed scenes in these foreign places. *Amor de Tarapaca*'s producer P3 told me that she planned to film foreign scenes of the drama in the US but she finally filmed them in Chile (personal communication, Feb 13, 2013, p.2).

East Asia as a space filled with resorts and natural scenery that may be considered unspoiled, and a place for relaxation by ordinary Taiwanese people. Dramas such as *Letter 1949* (2009), *In Time with You* (2011) and *Love Now* (2012), present Taiwanese characters who visit tourist spots in Thailand, Singapore and Philippines respectively, seeking relief from the stress of work and their daily lives.[87]

The desired cultures are framed positively whilst non-favourable cultures previously mentioned are either absent, neutral or negative. The PRC's image has been controversial and contradictory, as I will discuss in more detail later. Apart from the PRC, other (ex-) socialist countries, especially Russia and North Korea, are symbols of unknown mysteries and sources of threat in a police action drama *Black and White* (2009). Rooted in a pro-American and anti-Communist society, the Taiwanese TV drama involves villains from the mysterious North Korea and Russia, following Hollywood action thrillers that usually designate them as major enemies. In this police action drama, these characters are less negative and threatening than in Hollywood since they are not major military or political threats to Taiwan in my observation.

The characters mentioned above may not have direct and immediate significance in mainstream Taiwanese imaginations. Examining who are playing the love interests and important characters of Taiwanese protagonists would indicate which East Asian countries are being perceived as "significant others" for the idol dramas. We are witnessing the existence of a number of cross-cultural relationships in the idol dramas. Some of the idol dramas hired foreign actors from the PRC, Japan and South Korea, who acted as either the love interests or important friends of the Taiwanese protagonists in the dramas. In the age of globalisation, cross-cultural interactions and marriages are both rising in reality (H. z. Wang, 2007; Friedman, 2010; Chiu, Fell and Lin, 2014), but this rise does not form a strong motive for commercial media to draw on them. It may be argued that the East Asian cross-cultural romance has become an emergent plotting resource in the idol drama because, firstly, more idol dramas are targeting female and teenage audiences who have consumed TV dramas from Taiwan, South Korea and Japan and are devoted fans of popular stars in these TV dramas. Commercial media is now drawing on the stars' cultural backgrounds. Secondly, having protagonists played by foreign actors is to enter their

[87] I watched the idol dramas and noticed that they filmed scenes in these places.

markets. The idol dramas serve their specific economic imperatives to articulate each two entities together.

Thus, this chapter delineates idol dramas' inter-Asian articulations with three particular countries – PRC, Japan and South Korea. Each section begins with a brief summary of the production conditions of the bilateral linkages to explain the economic imperatives of the envisioning. Then, I will analyse their ideological articulations that unify Taiwan with each of these countries, and then their cultural imperatives for Taiwan. Their articulations of the dominant value systems in terms of political, cultural and gender aspects are the focus. To understand the recurring principles and themes in the cross-cultural dialogues and social, cultural and gender values communicated in the drama, I will focus on the idol dramas that stage cross-cultural relations. The imaginations are embodied in various Taiwanese protagonists interacting with characters of other East Asian countries on-screen. They form three levels of narrative: allegories of past or current relations between the countries; social (cultural, class and gender) values conveyed in the dramas; and the protagonists' relationships such as kinship and romantic relations. The narratives on social values intertwine with the allegorical articulations of the historical or contemporary relations of the countries. These articulations are conveyed by the different personal relationships of the on-screen characters played by the Taiwanese and East Asian idol stars, such as love, friendship and kinship. The dramas are confined by the production conditions examined in previous chapters and hence they are likely to articulate the dominant social (gender) value systems from the countries of their co-operators.

## 6.1 Interactions with the PRC

Taiwanese idol dramas can choose many ways to present Taiwanese interactions with the PRC, heavily shaped by their close but controversial relationship. Taiwanese TV companies started to co-produce with the PRC TV in the late 1980s (S.-C. Cheng, 2010; Lai, 2011). The cross-cultural depictions in such co-productions have changed quickly according to socio-economic transitions. In the beginning of the twenty-first century, the economic and social interactions between Taiwan and the PRC have become a *fait accompli* (Chow, 2013; Chiu, Fell and Lin, 2014; Tseng, 2014). Apart from the manufacturing sector of Taiwanese economy that has marched into the PRC since the 1990s, Taiwanese cultural and TV workers are also going to work with PRC local businesses

(Tseng, 2014; 2015). This trend is relaying to the idol drama industry as I analysed in chapter 4.2.2. In this new political economic context, interaction, reconciliation and harmony with the Chinese in social, economic and daily life settings are also recurring, common themes in the idol dramas that have PRC funding in the new century. Among countless idol dramas that were co-operated between Taiwanese and PRC companies, at least twelve dramas were set clearly against cross-cultural backdrops staging the cross-border movements of Taiwanese and Chinese people; a number of these were produced by Angie Chai (see the discussion in chapter 5.4). They are *Silence* (2006), *Just Give Me a Call* (2007), *Corner with Love* (2007), *Sweet Relationship* (2007), *Love or Bread* (2008), *Calling for Love* (2009), *Letter 1949* (2009), *Starlit* (2009), *Knock Knock Loving You* (2009), *Down with Love* (2010), *Hi My Sweetheart* (2010), *Fathers' War* (2011*), Queen of SOP* (2012).[88] These commercial works can be divided into two stages characterised by different financial and creative imperatives, in particular the changing power relationship between Taiwan and the PRC, as chapter 4.2.2 explained. In the first stage (early 2000s until 2010), Taiwanese idol drama enjoyed an advantage in the PRC market, prioritising the Taiwanese market and passively incorporating the PRC's elements. In these dramas, Taiwanese characters are usually economically more powerful. Most of the dramas have Taiwanese male and female protagonists. The PRC as a dramatic setting mainly functions as the venue of their love stories (Chu, 2010a). A limited number of dramas in this period stage Taiwanese men who work in the PRC and fall in love with local women. In the second stage (after 2010), the PRC TV industry has had more power and called for more idol drama makers from Taiwan, who very much relied on the PRC market for profit. Many dramas were domesticated by the PRC media and had only PRC characters. In the dramas set against a cross-cultural backdrop, the PRC characters might be socio-economically equal, or rising and even more affluent than Taiwanese characters: a young (and ideally rich) man from the PRC meets and marries a young Taiwanese woman.

In these Taiwanese-PRC dramas, two types of urban Taiwanese characters have commonly appeared as protagonists: first, a more compassionate, human-centred Taiwanese businessman who reduces the exploitation of capitalism and reaches socio-economic reconciliation with the Chinese; and, second, a Taiwanese person who shares the cultural values

[88] I watched these dramas and found out that they filmed scenes in Taiwan and PRC and staged the cross-border movements of Taiwanese and Chinese people.

of the PRC patriarchal nation-state officialdom. To understand the changing rules of cross-cultural dialogues and social (gender) values in the idol dramas' envisioning, I chose a representative drama from each stage: *Silence* (2006) and *Fathers' War* (2011).

*Silence* is a 20-episode drama co-funded by Angie Chai's Comic Ritz and Hong-Kong-turned-PRC Yi-Yuan Production House, the latter being responsible for the drama's distribution in the PRC market (EP2, personal communication, Feb 23, 2013, p.6). It is a representative attempt of Angie Chai to incorporate PRC funding and elements. It has all the typical elements of the first stage. The drama has actors from Taiwan, Hong Kong and South Korea for leading roles and casts PRC actors for supporting roles, shooting in Taiwan and the PRC in 2005. The drama was produced and released at a moment of political tension between Taiwan and PRC. On 14th of March in 2005, the PRC government ratified the Anti-Secession Law which formalised PRC governmental policy to use non-peaceful or military means against the Taiwanese political independence movement (Li, 2005; Rickards, 2005). The legislation aroused a huge outcry in the Taiwanese public sphere and worsened political relations between the DPP and PRC governments (Li, 2005; Rickards, 2005). But this political incident seemed to have no direct impact on the making of *Silence* and other co-production practices of the idol drama industry, especially when Angie Chai's PRC business was about to kick off. My informants did not recall any direct impacts of the political incident to their work (S1 and S2, personal communication, Feb 4, 2013, p.6; EP2, personal communication, Feb 23, 2013, p.13). It aired firstly in Taiwan in the summer of 2006.

*Fathers' War* (hereafter *FW*) was jointly produced by the PRC's Shenzhen Broadcasting System and Taiwanese Chun Long International Entertainment Co (*Sina Entertainment*, 2011; Y.-L. Wang, 2011a; *Citizen Weekly*, 2012). It only focuses on the relationship between the Taiwanese and the Chinese. It is a representative case in the second stage. Chinese characters are mainly male and stronger, yet it still has a Taiwanese patriarch. Moreover, its mediation of the cross-cultural interactions between Taiwanese and PRC patriarchs is an excellent example for us to understand how the two patriarchal nationalist value systems were articulated in imagination in the 2010s.

Comparing the two dramas produced in different years helps to illuminate the changing power relations between Taiwan and the PRC in dramatic imaginations in the current century. The eventual harmony between the two sides is jointly shared by *Silence* and *FW*. Both

communicate the theme of "reconciliation" to the markets, yet they do so with different social and cultural values: the first via the philanthropy of the rich that is under crisis, and the second via kinship support and shared Confucian familial values (respect for ancestors).

### 6.1.1 Making Reconciliations with the PRC

Angie Chai's drama usually follows a common dramatic formula shared by many TV dramas popular in Taiwan and East Asia. The formula in *Silence* is romantic love between two people from two classes and the protagonist's death at the end. Death of the protagonist is a common melodramatic strategy for its capacity to trigger the sympathy of the spectators (Mao, 2010; E. Tsai, 2010). In the first few years of the 2000s, South Korean TV drama had crossed a cultural border and was successful largely because of its successful utilisation of the two dramatic narrative techniques (class romance and protagonist's death) to an unprecedented extent (E. Tsai, 2010). This is set against a backdrop of Taiwanese and PRC economic integration in the Taiwan-PRC TV drama. The subject-matter of reconciliation is presented via the transformation of the hero, Chi Wei-Yi, played by the Taiwanese star, Vic Chou. London-educated Wei-Yi is heir to his family-owned company that operates in both the PRC and Taiwan. He goes to Qingdao of the PRC for a new shopping centre project that will be constructed on the site of an old building called Four Happiness House (hereafter House), currently inhabited by a group of poor local residents. In the House, he also meets his love interest Chao Shen-Shen, a young woman born to a South Korean father and a Taiwanese mother played by the actress Park Eun-Hye from the South Korean TV drama *Dae Jang Geum* (2003). During this time, he discovers that he has liver cancer and starts to change his values, cherishing the innocence of the House and caring about the situation of the residents. According to the story creators (S1 and S2, personal communication, Feb 4, 2013, p.7), it was a "happy accident" that worked to their benefit to construct a young Taiwanese man, who seemingly has everything (a rich family and an arranged life) but is going to die, as their protagonist. Through the portrayal of the unhappiness of rich people, their aim was to show that happiness comes from contribution and not wealth. Hence *Silence*'s key value is social contribution, and in particular the benevolence of the rich, which is told in the process of Wei-Yi's transformation.

> The Wei-Yi that we constructed was not happy in his life. He grew up in a confined environment… He hated his father who tortured his depressed mother. He had seen much of the violence beneath fortune and power…as well as hypocrisy…he had a heart of rebellion inside himself

> against his father. When he met the heroine (and the House), he felt that this group of people were very adorable. But just when he would like to change his attitude, it was too late that he was dying, so if we had any themes to express in the drama, it would be the importance of doing good deeds before it is too late. (S1 and S2, personal communication, Feb 4, 2013, p.7)

The resolution of the class conflict between Wei-Yi's company and the House is the background of his change and also his journey to love and happiness. The House symbolises the suffering innocent who need salvation that eventually comes from Wei-Yi. *Silence* could therefore be interpreted as an articulation in which the Chinese and Taiwanese reach harmony with Taiwan taking the role of the benefactor. In Wei-Yi's storyline, "China" means an innocent group of individuals threatened by his Taiwanese business – a pre-capitalist China. Only when he becomes a considerate loving person does he earn the reciprocal love of the House.

The central value of compassionate and human-centred capitalism is the key to reconciliation in *Silence*. In *FW*, the key becomes kinship support and shared Confucian and traditional values. *FW* articulates the two markets via Confucian values that are promoted by PRC's government and rooted in Taiwanese society. Such articulation is performed by the young Taiwanese actress Joanne Tseng, young Chinese actor Ling Xiao-Su, and veteran actors Gao Min (from the PRC) and Ma Ru-Lon (from Taiwan), who play the fathers. Tseng has developed a persona of "the girl next door" in her idol drama career (*Citizen Weekly*, 2012). Ma became well-known in the Taiwanese film market for his father role in the Taiwanese hit film *Cape No. 7* (2008), a movie conveying the male Southern Taiwanese grass-roots imagination (S. C. Wang, 2009, p.249; Chang, 2010, p.86; *Citizen Weekly*, 2012).

*FW* adopts a few narrative conventions of family drama: both parents and children are the main protagonists, having strong agency in the story. It revolves around the romantic encounter and subsequent path to marriage between Chen Li-Chun, the daughter of a Southern Taiwanese businessman, Mr Chen Cheng-Kung from Tainan City, and Fang Lei, the son of a Northern Chinese university professor called Fang Jianjun living in Tianjin City. Li-Chun's name seems to allude to the famous Taiwanese singer Teresa Li-Chun Teng, who occupied a very important role in cross-Strait pop cultural interaction and consumption. When the Chinese and Taiwanese governments banned cultural interaction, Teng's music flowed from Taiwan to the PRC and mesmerised Chinese youngsters in the 1980s (Liew, 2014, p.504). The conflicts between the two fathers contribute to the main obstacle in the way of marriage for the children, who also overcome cultural conflicts. The first conflict concerns differences in ways of living and personality. The two

patriarchs do not like each other. The Taiwanese characters are framed as occultists. Mr Chen and Li-Chun rely on their faith in supernatural forces and power to guide their actions and make choices. The daughter asks the Tarot – a pack of playing cards originating in Europe and now used by mystics and occultists as a guidance to life – whilst Mr Chen asks his traditional Taiwanese gods. Ma's on-screen persona as a Southern and Hoklo Taiwanese patriarch was obviously alluded to in *FW*. [89] Mr Chen lights up fireworks to scare away any wandering spirits surrounding his new residence opposite the Fangs, who abide by the Chinese regulations regarding fireworks. Prof Fang criticises Mr Chen for believing in feudal superstition. Prof Fang is educated, artistic and decent whilst Mr Chen tends to yell out loudly in the neighbourhood at midnight when he returns home drunk from social events.

The second conflict is also related to real estate. Mr Chen invests in a real estate project that plans to knock down Prof Fang's old house. The house is represented as the symbol of family for the Fangs. It becomes the major barrier when the two families have overcome their cultural difference mentioned earlier. Respect for ancestors symbolised by old buildings, which might presumably be the shared value between Taiwan and the PRC, is the key to the reconciliation. When Mr Chen takes Prof Fang to the Chen's familial shrine in Tainan and explains that the familial shrine is a symbol of the family's roots and must be preserved and memorialised, Prof Fang tells Mr Chen that the latter's investment in Tianjin would destroy his old house, which is his own symbol of family. Mr Chen decides to sacrifice his own interests in order to respect Prof Fang's wish to preserve the old house. Mr Chen's decision is opposed by other stake holders in the business project and is ambushed by them. Seeing Mr Chen's trouble, Prof Fang decides to help Mr Chen. He says goodbye to his old house and gives the house to Mr Chen. Both families sacrifice something, help each other reciprocally, and develop mutual respect for each other. I argue that mutuality (mutual support and respect) is an important value mediated in *FW*, interpreting the message against the cross-Strait backdrop. The drama emphasises the value as

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[89] Ma's public subjectivity has mainly been established in the 2008 movie *Cape No. 7*, in which his character is an authority figure representing the local council in a Taiwanese southern town. Disappointed at the fact that the local community has been losing its young population, who go to Taipei to earn a living, and upset that investment from outside is changing the local area, he has determined to gain self-autonomy. The character is argued as a representation of a typical Taiwanese local elderly patriarch in the countryside in Southern Taiwan, who is morally decent but ill-tempered and tends to vulgarly express his ideas. He is more fluent in Hokkien than Mandarin. His famous line that he shouts out provocatively is that "his interests are to quarrel, fight, kill and cause a fire" to frighten the capitalists from outside (*Cape No. 7*, 2008; Huang, 2014). In *FW*, Ma is still portrayed as a Southern Taiwanese patriarch, recalling his signature character. But in the TV drama he becomes a Taiwanese capitalist expanding business in the PRC instead, thus representing another side of Southern Taiwan.

a response to the troublesome political climate and serious antagonism between Taiwan and the PRC. Capitalism is not denounced. Instead a benevolent capitalist is imagined as a good force. Also *FW* provides an imagination that articulates Taiwanese and PRC sides with the Confucian value system, which is the centre of PRC's cultural policy in the 2000s and has been deeply ingrained in Taiwanese patriarchal values.

### 6.1.2 Changing Allegories of Political Economic Relations

Taiwanese mainstream media tended to perceive Taiwan as agent of modernisation to the mainland Chinese in the 1990s, following the pro-American anti-Communist cultural imagination of the KMT, when Taiwanese businesses in general started exploiting the market and cheap labour of the PRC (Shih, 1995, p.164). In terms of culture, Taiwan perceives itself as more modern and advanced on account of its continuous capitalistic economic development and hence urban culture (Shih, 1995; 1998). According to Shih (1998, p.286), this envisioning was very vulnerable because the developmental gap was relatively small and by the end of the twentieth century, Taiwanese confidence was replaced by hesitation and anxiety.

The idol drama industry in Taiwan has relative autonomy from the larger political economy. First of all, it enjoyed a relative advantage in relation to the PRC's counterpart until 2009 (P1, personal communication, March 26, 2013, p.9), as chapter 4 and 5 indicated; the anxiety was less obvious in the early 2000s. Idol drama mainly thematises romantic encounters set against cultural and class differences alongside sub-themes such as friendship and inter-generation gaps. Since it emphasises socio-economic, personal and generational conflicts and reconciliation rather than any political expression, the idea of the nation-state or nationalist discourses seldom plays a direct role in the narratives.

The interactions of Wei-Yi and the Chinese characters are central in *Silence*'s Taiwan-PRC articulation, which arguably repeats the Taiwanese envisioning of the 1990s. Their relationship is opposite to the political and military relationship between the two countries. Wei-Yi resolves the class conflict with the House, which becomes his object of contribution. Wei-Yi becomes a friend to A-Ling and A-Han, two younger residents in the House, and teaches A-Han to swim. He gives A-Han a dictionary to do some basic self-learning when he is informed that A-Han does not read or write. A-Han is also a source of happiness and reflections that he can learn from. It may be argued that his benefactor/teacher role is an envisioning of Taiwanese mainstream ideology: a

nurturing figure in the cultivation process of Chinese youth. Here, the reconciliation comes to Taiwan and the PRC in a situation where the Taiwanese idol drama industry enjoys a more advantageous position when facing the PRC.

The power relation is envisioned much more equally in *FW,* showing the changing power relations between two societies. Since the 2010s, especially after the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, the transition in the economic power relationship between Taiwan and the PRC has been even more visible (Guo and Teng, 2011). The textual imaginations have had a parallel change, as more co-produced idol dramas have conformed to the PRC market's social and cultural values which are highly controlled by the PRC government. *FW* has stronger Chinese roles. Whilst *Silence* mainly features South Korean, Hong Kong and Taiwanese actors, *FW* has only a Taiwanese woman and a PRC man who are getting married. The fathers possess different types of capitals: the Taiwanese father is rich yet vulgar; the Chinese father is a cultural elite. They are not inferior to each other in any particular area.

On the one hand, the difference marks the gradual adaptation of the idol dramas to the socio-cultural context of the PRC market. The PRC market context has determined the production of these co-produced idol dramas and consequently their dramatic presentations of Taiwanese and Chinese subjects. Yet, on the other, their different negotiation strategies are geo-cultural. The Tainan elements of *FW* address the more traditional sentiments of Southern Taiwan. *Silence* is probably a Taipei-centred, Northern Taiwanese envisioning of its relation with the contemporary PRC.

The political atmospheres of the two dramas are different, which was probably a deeply rooted ideological factor. The cross-Strait relations worsened in DPP's administration during 2000 and 2008 (Wang, 2008). The PRC ratified the Anti-Secession Law in 2005 to prevent Taiwan from moving towards independence (Li, 2005; Rickards, 2005). In 2008, the KMT government returned to power and encouraged more interaction between Taiwan and the PRC (He, 2010, p.46; Muyard, 2010, p.7). Given these contexts, *Silence* was produced in a politically tense atmosphere, thus it was more apolitical. *FW* was produced in an environment in which the official government encouraged interaction, so it dared to allude to politics.

The two dramas do not mention Taiwanese political status or any activities related to the Taiwanese independence movement as political discussion is simply not the term of reference of

the two TV dramas targeting young women. Writer S1, who wrote for *Silence*, commented that *Silence* did not have cultural intentions and its initiative was purely commercial:

> The meaning of the work did not lie on cultural interaction for the production companies. They (the companies) just wanted to make a drama which has good feedback and is emotionally touching and popular among the audience. (S1, personal communication, Feb 4, 2013, p.17)

The writers of *Silence* say that they "only wanted to tell a beautiful story to touch and comfort the audience" (S1 and S2, personal communication, Feb 4, 2013, p.18), with their knowledge of the social economic reality in Taiwan in relation to the other countries in which the drama was set:

> We constructed the story with all our perceptions…The plot hinged reasonably on the reality of the time…we only wanted to tell a good story for the audiences. So we told it nicely and fluently! We did not make it sound awkward! The materials that we had were a South Korean actress who must not speak, a Hong Kong actor playing Hong Kong man, and a Taiwanese idol star …The characters needed to go to a foreign city…because the co-produced TV drama must have mainland Chinese elements and scenes for a few episodes. Therefore, we were limited by it. We had to arrange them (the three actors mentioned above) to go to mainland China reasonably. (S1 and S2, personal communication, Feb 4, 2013, pp.10-15)

I do not think that *Silence* consciously reduced political issues to private and economic engagements – a meaning which, if it exists, is more of a contextual interpretation of viewers. My analysis supports the idea that *Silence*'s articulation was ideologically structured and the packaging team members were contextually determined by multiple factors, that is, the ideologies expressed through the unaware packagers.

In *FW*, the history of Tainan as a political centre in a Dutch colony and the late Ming Dynasty era, is selected. When Li-Chun, who works as a tour guide, presents local scenic spots to tourists, she introduces Dutch-period Fort Provintia and Tainan Confucius Temple. But Tainan's Japanese legacies do not appear, such as Tainan's Butokuden, a historical building where Japanese people taught and learned martial arts in the Japanese colonial period.[90] In terms of subject-matter, the lack of political matters in the two dramas is not as serious as a "structuring absence" – something that the subject-matter requires but the work avoids (Dyer, 2002, p.83) – in the two dramas. Yet the absence that can create multiple interpretations is important in the production aspect. Without the absence, any co-production dramas between Taiwan and the PRC cannot proceed. The two dramas do not state clearly the political identities of the characters. As chapter 5.4 indicated, such textual tactics however polysemically articulate different political discourses. The on-screen

[90] Tainan's Butokuden's introduction is available at: http://www.tnwcdo.gov.tw/culture01a.asp?ID=%7B41410BCC-E046-435A-A25D-133F17CDAC90%7D [Accessed 16 April 2016].

characters who come from Taipei and Tainan can be interpreted as either citizens of the PRC or the ROC, etc.

*FW* seems more of a political allegory than *Silence*. It was conscious about the co-existence of the conflicts and shared culture of Southern Taiwan and the PRC as it intended to articulate the conflicting societies. Yet it overtly alluded to politics between Taiwan and the PRC in only one scene. In the scene, the two families confront each other to discuss the relationship between Li-Chun and Lei, and the characters themselves refer to the meeting as "a cross-(Taiwan) Strait summit" – a political term referring to the official meetings of the ROC and PRC governments. The point that I am making here is that these idol dramas targeting young women and teenagers had few political imperatives and the political allusion is generally scarce in *FW*. *FW* is still very apolitical in comparison with the overt political text found in the New Cinemas of Taiwan. A recent Taiwanese film *It Takes Two to Tango* (2014) made by Wan Ren – a film-maker from the school of Taiwan New Cinema – contains a large number of overt political allegories (Lan, 2014; Tsui, 2015). It may be argued that *FW* only nods towards the tricky cross-Strait tensions with which the audience is very familiar, and does not delve any deeper into the matter.

I argue that the most important factor that makes the character of a capitalist businessman popular in Taiwanese-PRC co-productions might be related to the narrative tradition of idol drama, especially its most popular urban romance genre. As it was discussed in chapter 4, the subject-matter of idol dramas, especially within the romance genre, is a romantic fantasy that overcomes class difference – thus the presence of rich people, especially young rich men, is particularly important for the narrative to show class difference and upper-class lifestyles. However, how the male protagonist obtains love is different in every story. This pursuit of love can apparently be set against the backdrop of Taiwanese and PRC economic integration, with a sub-theme of cross-cultural interaction. We can ask one important question here: why is reconciliation a recurring subject-matter in the co-produced commercial dramas? This might be where the idol dramas become political. They are not political by narrating politics and making political allegory themselves; most of the time, they interact with politics indirectly by comforting the audience under political contestations. As Laurent Berlant (2008, pp.3-4) argues, female-oriented cultures "bracket" political tensions temporarily to find a soothing space that locates only "juxta-politically" to politics. These reconciliation themes continuously speak to the female audience of idol dramas, who are aware of political conflicts in the background yet ask for ultimate peaceful resolution.

Though the central purpose of the idol dramas was mainly to appeal to the audience, the two dramas and the actors happened to contribute to the dialogues of Taiwan and the PRC at different historical moments with different production resources.

### 6.1.3 Gradual Acceptance of Patriarchal Confucian Values

The two dramas differ in their mediation of patriarchal values. *Silence* has a very negative patriarchal figure. Its destructive force is Wei-Yi's domineering and profit-oriented father, Mr Chi. Throughout the story, the hierarchy of male figures is manifest through Mr Chi. When Wei-Yi insists on resolving the land conflict through financially helping the House, his action can be seen as his defiance of the patriarchal control. It may be argued that Wei-Yi bears the burden of bringing social justice to the deepening socio-economic inequality present in the integrated Taiwan-PRC economy. In his personal transformation he liberates himself from his domineering father. At the end of the drama, he dies in peace.

*Silence* chose Park Eun-Hye, the South Korean actress from *Dae Jang Geum*, as mentioned earlier, in response to the popularity of South Korean TV dramas – and *Dae Jang Geum* in particular (Chen, 2005b; EP2, personal communication, Feb 23, 2013, p.11). The drama swept over East Asia, including Taiwan, Hong Kong and the PRC, in 2004 and 2005 (Kim, 2009; Rawnsley, 2014). It may be argued that Park's participation was a result of the Taiwanese idol drama industry's capitalisation on the South Korean media culture. The reproduction of *Dae Jang Geum*'s femininity in *Silence* was in fact more of the intervention of Chinese official policy (see discussion in chapter 5.4.1). To recap, in the initial script of *Silence,* the heroine was vengeful, approaching Wei-Yi and his family. But this script was self-censored by the PRC market distributor as the plots might not pass the TV censorship of the PRC (S1 and S2, personal communication, Feb 4, 2013, p.9). The creators softened the story that went back to the *Dae Jang Geum* template, that of mediating and shaping Chinese femininity in the new century that was governed by the Hu Jintao administration's cultural policy during 2002 and 2012. Her character Shen-Shen had a "puppy love" with Wei-Yi in the past. Her positive, tender, decent, upright and strong-willed character is just like the protagonist in *Dae Jang Geum*. She makes a living by running a Korean food truck business in Taiwan, after her parents passed away. She is a lovely daughter and sister to her adoptive father and brother (played by Andy Hui) from Hong Kong. Arriving in the PRC to

seek a traditional medicine[91] remedy for her muteness[92], she stands with the House against Wei-Yi. As Taiwanese idol dramas have created many Cinderella heroines that demand the rescue of heroes, it brings a critical edge to departure from the representation of the previous Cinderella forms of femininity (Wu, 2008, pp.27-74). One way to do so might be to combine the Cinderella femininity with that of "Gaia", a "motherly" type of femininity that is full of strength that can give birth to positive energies. In terms of socio-economic status, Shen-Shen as a working-class woman is inferior to Wei-Yi. Yet she owns a small business and lives on her own and she does not end up marrying Wei-Yi. In terms of vitality, she is much livelier than the dying hero. The drama instils much energy and agency into her. In two scenes, she dives into water to rescue the aching hero losing consciousness in the water. In other words, the heroine is more of a Gaia than Cinderella.

In contrast, *FW* has positive patriarchal figures, and children who follow their fathers' wishes. The Confucian paternalist values are also present in the reconciliation of inter-generational conflicts in *FW*, too. The patriarchs play central roles in the futures of their children, who achieve harmony with them in the end. Their traditional values concerning gender roles and division are positively portrayed as their children, who live in a global age, eventually accept their values. In the beginning, Lei works for a high-end restaurant as a cuisine designer, but his father belittles his occupation as merely a cook. Li-Chun runs away to Tianjin because she is fed up with Mr Chen's control. When Mr Chen is ill and goes to hospital, she becomes conscious of her father's love and voluntarily complies with his wishes. When they are preparing for the wedding, Li-Chun is advised by Prof Fang to follow the traditional Confucian teachings on marriage and femininity. Lei is advised by Mr Chen to be more economically responsible, so he decides to launch his own restaurant. As a character that represents a new generation, Lei's new business targets middle-class consumers with healthy and ordinary food rather than high-end and fancy dishes. This transformation is related to his trip to Tainan, which is famous for food for ordinary people (*CNN*, 2015). In other words, "Tainan" changes him. This is a clear message about mutual change in interaction.

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[91] "China" means a root of traditional Chinese medicine in the storyline of Shen-Shen.

[92] Giving her a mute character was a narrative design to resolve the actress's difficulty in delivering lines in Mandarin on her own (S1 and S2, personal communication, Feb 4, 2013, p.5).

The serious contestation among gendered generational values in *FW* concerns the characterisation of Lei's younger sister Fang Ying, who studies journalism. In the beginning of the drama, the young woman, who has dreamed of working as a war correspondent, informs Prof Fang of her plan. He strongly objects to her idea mainly because of security concerns. Yet the work plan is interrupted by external factors from her work institution, so the drama does not go any further into generational politics. She quickly turns her attention to cross-Strait cultural interaction. In the crisis, Prof Fang is paternal yet reasonable and sensible. Ying later helps Li-Chun's older brother, who has been in a fraught relationship with Mr Chen, to figure out and resolve his tension and conflict with Mr Chen. In summary, *FW* offers a happy ending, with reconciliations and harmonies between Taiwanese and PRC sides, and between the young and older generations. In the end, the difficulties are resolved and the fathers are happy.

## 6.2 Interactions with Japanese

In chapter 4.2.3, I argued that two factors have shaped the general production conditions of recent Japanese-Taiwanese TV co-operations: firstly, the Japanese promote their media culture and tourist attractions in East Asian and Chinese-speaking markets and, secondly, the Taiwanese wish to market Taiwanese idol stars and dramas in Japan. Adapting popular texts from Japan, such as manga, has been a major and conventional choice for Taiwanese idol dramas that seek Japanese money (P1, personal communication, March 26, 2013, p.6). Taiwanese idols debuted in Taiwanese TV adaptations of manga. Yet, they need to constantly change their persona to interest the audience, especially to appeal to the Japanese market. Japanese marketing of idol dramas has asked for "novelty of the Taiwanese male stars" that may come from the transition of the stars' persona (S3, personal communication, Jan 25, 2013, p.22). The transition stays in a range so as to guarantee commercial safety.[93] Gradually, original narratives starring Taiwanese idols also interested Japanese buyers. Combining Japanese elements and Taiwanese idol stars

[93] Scriptwriter S3 told me about the logic of stardom innovation in the Japanese market. This novelty must be confined within a certain range. Their characters' professions may change but their persona must have some consistency in the romantic part. "For the Japanese (market), the new element of the star's persona should be different from the established ones…but the novelty must also have some level of commercial safety! …For instance, Jerry Yan always plays the role of a dedicated lover. Then he plays a gangster who turns to good deeds – a novelty for them (Japanese)! ...He has been playing a loafer, so his new role as a doctor means novelty. Successful projects in Japan always have a new, different element for the Japanese". (S3, personal communication, Jan 25, 2013, p.22)

thus becomes a key strategy for Japanese-Taiwanese joint operations (see the discussion in chapter 4.2.3).

Idol dramas have made use of Japanese settings, e.g. *Meteor Garden* (2001), *Starry Starry Night* (2002), *Tomorrow* (2002), *Mars* (2004), *Honey and Clover* (2008), *Die Sterntaler* (2012), *Alice in Wonder City* (2012), *IUUI* (2013), *You Light up My Star* (2014), etc.[94] In these dramas Japan is the Taiwanese protagonists' destination for education, travel or work. Seven dramas have created Japanese characters for key roles. They are *Corner with Love* (2007), *Miss No Good* (2008), *Because of You* (2010), *Alice in Wonder City*, *Spring Love* (2013), *Gangster's Bakery* (2014) and *You Light up My Star.* Young female Japanese come to or live with Taiwanese kin in Taiwan in *Because of you, Alice in Wonder City*, *Gangster's Bakery*. *Spring Love* also has a Japanese man settling into his Taiwanese father's family. Most of the Japanese characters have been played by Taiwanese actors or Japanese actors who debuted in Taiwan (Yeh, 2006; Yang, 2009c; Mei, 2016). Only three recent dramas – *Gangster's Bakery* (2014), *You Light up My Star* (2014) and *Once Upon a Time in Beitou* (2014) – cast established Japanese actors based in Japan's media industry after Japanese media enterprises started interactions with idol drama companies (NTDTV, 2013; Li, 2014, p.6; Shang, 2014a).

Two themes recur in idol dramas that have major Japanese characters: first, Japanese individuals settling in Taiwan and, second, the interactions and connections between Japanese and Taiwanese (pop) culture. The articulations draw on the present or historical Japanese-Taiwanese relation. Together, the dramatic themes manifest three ideological desires of Taiwan: (1) cosmopolitanism or multiculturalism of Taiwan, (2) hierarchical cultural interaction (in classical music and pop culture) and (3) progress in the modernisation. Naturally, there are also romantic relations that take place between the Taiwanese and Japanese protagonists, depending on the dramas' specific conditions. Among all these dramas there are three that manifest the above three themes the most: *Alice in Wonder City*, *Gangster's Bakery* and *You Light up My Star*. The first one is a Taiwanese production that capitalises on a Japanese setting and characters and manifests the three desires. The latter two are co-funded by both Japanese and Taiwanese sides

[94] I watched some episodes of the idol dramas and found out that they filmed scenes in these Japanese places.

and partially reiterate the first one in their ways. The three are all backed by GTV, who purchased their Taiwanese show right.

### 6.2.1 A Japanese Girl Settling in Cosmopolitan Taiwan

The dramatisation of the above mentioned desires is very visible in *Alice in Wonder City* (hereafter *AWC*) that thematises several intersecting relations between Taiwan and Japan. Initiated by story writer S3, the drama echoed the event of the Taipei International Flora Exposition that took place in 2010 and 2011, by narrating the relationship between the local population, music and flowers in Taipei (personal communication, Jan 25, 2013, p.20). Taipei's historical relation with Japan was hinted. *AWC* was partially shot in Matsuyama city (Japan) since its local government had active interactions with Taipei City government in the same period (S3, personal communication, Jan 25, 2013, pp.20-21). The key depiction of Japanese-Taiwanese relations revolves around two Taiwanese protagonists: violinist He Ting-Yu and his motherly friend, Lisa King. Its first Taiwan-Japan relation is between Lisa and her daughter, Ito Seiko (aka Alice); the second between Ting-Yu and a Japanese connoisseur who gives him a precious violin.

In the first relation, Lisa worked in night clubs in Kabukicho of Shinjuku, Tokyo, when she was young. She married one of her customers, botanist Dr Ito. The elder generation of the Itos did not approve of their marriage. When Mr Ito lost his life on an expedition, Lisa was forced to leave Japan. Seiko has been brought up by the Itos since then. Lisa opened an Alice café in Taipei. In the beginning of the drama, Seiko approaches Lisa, who accepts her with surprise. Seiko symbolises the post-war political economic relationship of Taiwan and Japan. The post-war US-Japan economic bloc in East Asia tied Taiwanese economic activities strongly to those of Japan. When the Japanese economy was booming in the 1970s-1980s, a number of young Taiwanese women worked in the nightclubs of Tokyo (Mao, 2002, p.47; Chiou, 2005, pp.125-127). According to Shwu-Wen Chiou (2005, pp.125-127), the influx of non-Japanese East Asian female workers into the Japanese sex industry was related to the economic gap between Japan and other East Asian countries, the Japanese government giving visas to foreign entertainment performance workers, and thus for the prostitute culture of Japanese men. Hence the idea of a woman who worked in Tokyo at a young age and had children coming from Japan to Taiwan to find her mother, made sense to S3:

> The idea of a Taiwanese woman who sang or worked in night clubs in Kabukicho at her young age is very familiar to me. She left a child in Japan…The daughter comes back to find her mother but in the meantime she also has some desire for revenge or intends to discover the truth... (S3, personal communication, Jan 25, 2013, p.4)

The parent-child relationship draws on the historical reality of the post-war movements of Taiwanese women. It counter-acts the nationally perceived parent-child relationship between Japan and Taiwan that Japanese colonial history may have inflicted upon the Taiwanese collective psyche, but the presentation of a deserted half-Taiwanese, half-Japanese child is also influenced by the Taiwanese post-colonial psyche. In the interview, S3 talked about her perception of the colonial history.

> I feel that Taiwan is to some degree like a thing that the Japanese left behind after WWII. Let's put it this way: Taiwan was adopted by Japan. But was it a true kinship, or was Japan simply an adoptive/foster parent for the Taiwanese? I feel that this question is interesting. Many of my dramas are more or less related to Japan – in fact, I am too. For example, my grandparents on my mother's side speak Japanese…Japanese culture has had a strong influence on me. (S3, personal communication, Jan 25, 2013, p.4)

It may be argued that Lisa and Seiko can also allegorise the ex-colonial relation between Japan and Taiwan. Lisa functions as "the colonial Japan as mother" the other way around, whilst Seiko symbolises the "colonised Taiwan as child", contrary to their actual national positions. Seiko's unity with Lisa symbolises Taiwan's harmony with Japan. Here *AWC* once again speaks to the post-colonial Taiwan's nostalgia towards Japanese colonial rule.

Seiko approaches Lisa for two reasons, which eventually lead to her settling down in Taipei. The first reason is connected to her father's death. Dr Ito worked for a Japan-based company that wants to find a plant – also called Alice – for commercial use. After his death, the company then controls Seiko and asks her to find out if Lisa holds any information about the Alice plant. Once she accomplishes the mission, she may be free from its control. This is a more negative representation of the Japanese business world. Secondly, it is a discovery of maternal love for Seiko herself. Both searches for truth and love are an allegorical redemption on Seiko's part. Gradually the mother and daughter establish true intimacy and a loving bond: Seiko understands that Lisa did not leave her on purpose and feels that she is loved. In the end, Lisa rescues Seiko from the company's control but loses her life in the process. Seiko decides to continue Lisa's café in Taiwan. The settling down of Seiko in Taiwan speaks of the Taiwanese desire to be cosmopolitan, that Taiwan can be the home of Japanese who identify with Taiwan.

The cosmopolitanism theme conveyed via parent-child relationship is reiterated in another idol drama, *Gangster's Bakery* (hereafter *GB*) that cast an established Japanese actress to play

a Japanese child to Taiwanese parents. The commercial success of the Taiwanese adaptation of manga encouraged GTV and Jerry Feng to make *GB,* a live-action version of the Japanese manga *Chocolat* drawn by Kubonouchi Eisaku and published by Shogakukan, Inc. in the magazine *Big Comic Spirits* during 1999 to 2003 (Hung, 2010b; Tu, 2012b). The drama stars well-known Japanese actress Nagasawa Masami, whose participation was its biggest selling point (Tu, 2012b). Nagasawa is popular as men's ideal lover in Taiwan for her role in the best-selling Japanese romantic movie *Crying out Love, in the Centre of the World* (2004). Japanese comedy director Kitamura Toyoharu, who has worked in Taiwanese film and TV, was hired to direct the drama. It may be argued that this would help Jerry Feng to communicate with the Japanese actress more easily and also he could label the drama a Taiwanese-Japanese co-operation (S7, personal communication, March 15, 2013, p.4).

The original seven-volume manga is a Japan-based story about the strange familial relationship between a girl and her ex-gangster stepfather, as well as his ex-gang members, when her biological father, who is a businessman, has financial difficulty – an allegory of post-bubble-economy Japan.[95] To accommodate her Japanese identity, the TV adaptation changed the story's setting. Tatsumi Chie is a Japanese music student born to a Taiwanese mother and a Japanese father. She comes to Taiwan to seek shelter with her Taiwanese stepfather because of her father's financial troubles. The Taiwanese world that Chie enters consists of two gangs, the head of one of which is her stepfather. However, the gang disbands when her mother dies. Her stepfather leaves the world of gangs to run a small bakery. The drama revolves around how Chie establishes a familial connection with the ex-gangsters and how these ex-gangsters finally get away from the complex world in which they lived. Chie does not settle in to her new environment through daily and historical connection, but through an adventure and un-ordinary process, following the original manga's structure. The gangster action comedy situates her and her Japanese father in several crises that are resolved by the ex-gangsters. Chie witnesses how the rival gang forces her stepfather to return to the previous lifestyle he led as a gangster, how their previous enemies seek retaliation against these ex-gangsters and how she, in the end, genuinely treats them as family.

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[95] Visit the wikipedia entry of the manga for more English information about it: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chocolat_(manga) [Accessed 24 August 2016].

Yet *GB* reproduces the Japan-Taiwan relationship and the Taiwanese cosmopolitanism with stereotypes commonly seen in previous Taiwanese and Japanese commercial media. The omnipresent representation of Japanese ambiance in many Taiwanese media has been noted as the main form of Taiwanese post-colonial engagement with Japan (Tsai, 2005, p.109). *GB* also demonstrates this. The bakery and home of the former gangsters is located in a traditional Japanese house. One of the former gangsters is fluent in Japanese and acts as Chie's interpreter. The Japanese setting would articulate the mainstream Japanese perception of Taiwan as the place in East Asia that is closest to Japan, in terms of culture.

The subject-matter of gangsters, which is forbidden in the PRC's media system (Sek, 2013), is more acceptable in Japan-funded works. But the gangster genre is commented to be embedded in Japanese orientalism towards East Asia. This Japanese social and cultural discourse was based on the economic status of Japan during the old times before the 1990s in which the Japanese perception of East Asia was dominated by the "flying geese paradigm". This theory, which was raised in the 1930s and gained prominence in the 1960s, can be seen as the most mainstream Japanese thinking with regard to East Asian economic development and the Japan-Asia economic relationship. The 1960s' version proposed by Japanese economist Kaname Akamatsu (1959 cited in Iwabuchi, 2002, p.10, p.213) sees Japan as a top economic power (the first goose) leading the other East Asian and South East Asian industrialising economic entities. Japanese orientalism towards East Asia has had many aspects. In the post-WWII Japanese discourse, "(East) Asia" as a separate discursively-constructed entity has tended to be backward as a result of the huge economic gap. On the one hand, legal and illegal immigration from Chinese-speaking countries was treated as a serious social issue in Japan (Lo, 2005, p.146). On the other, interacting with the East Asians also triggered the nostalgia of contemporary Japanese people for a more primitive and pristine past (Yeh, 2010a, pp.63-64). From this viewpoint, the gangster genre is embedded in the Japanese orientalism towards East Asia.

The Japan-East Asia (Taiwan) relationship has been a theme in Japanese gangster films. The world of gangs has been noted by film scholars as a cultural symbol signifying the difference between Japan and its East Asian neighbours (Hyland, 2002; Lo, 2005; Yeh, 2010a). The late 1990s' Japanese gangster thrillers depict the underworld of Chinese-speaking gangs in Tokyo in *Swallowtail* (1996) and *Sleepless Town* (1998) (Hyland, 2002; Lo, 2005). Japanese film director Miike Takashi also shot his film *Rainy Dog* (1997) – a sequel to his gangster thriller *Shinjuku Triad*

*Society* (1995) – in Taiwan. The films envision Taiwan as a shelter where the Japanese would hide from their troubles (Yeh, 2010a). Post-war Japan tends to look down on Taiwan with condescension (Iwabuchi, 2002, p.11). Taiwan shows a "double otherness" for Japan: Taiwan is a Chinese-language society triggering Japan's fear and loathing towards ethnic Chinese but it also makes Japanese tourists feel comfortable in Taiwan's Japanised familiarity; Taiwan also triggers the highly-modernised Japan's nostalgia for primitivity (Yeh, 2010a, pp.63-64). The East Asian gangster is a stereotypical filmic representation of an untidy, mysterious and complicated "(East) Asia" in comparison to an urban Japan. *GB* reiterates some of the themes appearing in these films in a feminine and family-oriented way.

The Japanese oriental myth regarding "East Asia" might no longer be persuasive in the 2010s, especially when South Korea and the PRC have asserted their modernity, and contemporary Taiwan is westernised. There is another modern and westernised world different from the gangster's underworld in Taiwan in *GB*, which is the university. Chie continues her study as a transfer student in Taiwan and is taught by teachers educated in the US.

The Japanese must learn Mandarin. The promotional video of *GB* shows how Nagasawa Masami managed to flawlessly deliver her lines in Mandarin, thus demonstrating her effort to appeal to Taiwanese audiences, who love to see the cultural closeness between themselves and the star.[96] This also shows the perfectionism and dedication of the Japanese star, which I will highlight in the next section as key values communicated in the Taiwanese-Japanese co-productions.

### 6.2.2 Hierarchical Cultural Interactions

In the chosen dramas, Taiwanese artists are in need of Japanese recognition/advice in their advance. In the second relation of *AWC*, Taiwan is modern yet in crisis. It is displayed by violinist He Ting-Yu and a Japanese connoisseur. Played by Aaron Yan from the Taiwanese idol group Fahrenheit, Ting-Yu is a well-known but psychologically scarred musician star. He has been marketed by his agent as a genius violinist, but in fact has seldom played the violin from his heart. His then mother, Ms He, who was a well-known pianist, had very high expectations of him. The family had no patriarch and the mother and son (whose surname follows his mother) had a tense

[96] The promotion video is available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XXDKQ7WPmBk [Accessed 14 January 2014].

relationship. When Ms He died, he became an alcoholic, suffering from insomnia and looking for self-redemption. The opposite of Ting-Yu is another violinist, Chen Hai-Chieh, who comes from the countryside, symbolising uncorrupted new hope.

Ting-Yu's violin disappears because his agent secretly sells it for money – a moral problem he must resolve later. He goes to Japan (Matsuyama) to pursue a famous yet cursed violin named Siren. The idea of a world-class violin owned by Japanese built on the Taiwanese image of Japan – a country that ably integrates Western influence (Western classical music) with its traditional elements (Japanese traditional setting), as I will explained later. This image has been commented to appear in previous Taiwanese literary works (Lu, 2014, p.259). According to the scriptwriter of *AWC*, choosing Matsuyama was for its classical artistic atmosphere:

> Matsuyama is a very special place. It has very strong artistic atmosphere…Matsuyama alongside its old city delivers a very special aura. Thus we assessed which scenes in the drama could be set and shot in Matsuyama…Thus the violin (Siren) was there. (S3, personal communication, Jan 25, 2013, p.20)

In the drama, Siren's incumbent owner is set in an elegant Japanese traditional mansion. Yet his conversation with Ting-Yu is in both English and Japanese. The Japanese connoisseur is a stern assessor of Ting-Yu, echoing the long economic and cultural relationship between Japan and Taiwan. He turns down Ting-Yu at first because he senses Ting-Yu's contradictions and instability inside and judges that Ting-Yu is not ready to play Siren. Yet the violin chooses Ting-Yu. That night, the owner dreams of Ting-Yu playing Siren and interprets his dream as a sign that Siren has chosen Ting-Yu as its new master by itself. So he hands Siren to Ting-Yu – a point which I will further examine later.

This hierarchical relation between Taiwan in crisis and the forerunner Japan in terms of modernisation progress also appears in *You Light up My Star* (hereafter *YLMS*). *YLMS* is a meta-drama about the operation of the luminous but complex Taiwanese capitalist media star system.[97] It stars Taiwanese stars Joseph Cheng and Nine Chang, who are known to the Japanese market for their previous roles in *It Started with a Kiss* (2005) and *White Tower* (2006). Both dramas have Japanese manga/fiction and TV drama versions. *YLMS* was partially financed by Japanese Amuse Soft's Taiwanese branch as its ending credits show.[98] Its main story developer, Chu Yu-

[97] Meta-drama, according to the definition of Richard Hornby (1986, p.31), is a drama about drama. A meta-drama is self-reflexive. It pays attention to drama itself, including its operation.

[98] Its opening credit can be found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=noKnnXJZBGo [Accessed 17 April 2016] where Ichige Rumiko, the president of Amuse Taiwan, appears alongside other funders.

Ning, made his name as a TV director by successfully adapting Japanese manga into Taiwanese live-action versions, including *The Rose* (2003), *It Started with a Kiss* (2005) and *Sweet Relationship* (2007) (Chu, 2012; Taipei Film Commission, 2012). Chu has been thinking about industrial creative breakthrough, especially genre diversity. He believes that as long as the idol drama industry improves its storytelling, it can have a longstanding East Asian market value:

> My TV dramas are usually sold to the Asian markets. If we can keep providing solid and unique stories, we definitely can create a good and promising Asian market (for our works). (Chu, 2012 cited in Taipei Film Commission, 2012)

Therefore, Chu produced the meta-drama. *YLMS* gives audiences a chance to see what goes on behind the scenes of their favourite idol dramas, but abandons the theme of romantic love by placing a couple in career and relationship crises at the narrative's centre. Revolving around a fictional idol star Liu Cheng-Wei and his pairing actress Chang Man-Ling, it shows the difficulty of the stars fighting against the standardisation of commercial culture and also examines their complex relationship.

The contemporary relations between the Taiwanese and Japanese media industries is allegorised by Cheng-Wei's interaction with an established Japanese star played by Amuse Soft's top artist Fukuyama Masaharu, with whom Cheng-Wei discusses the topic of this popular star's work. In the past, Cheng-Wei arrogantly asked Fukuyama, whom he thought was a hotel waiter, to pass him a bottle of water. Fukuyama calmly did as Cheng-Wei asked. Afterwards, the troubled Cheng-Wei seeks opinion from Fukuyama with regards to his work as a popular idol star, asking how he can keep believing in himself in reaching perfection after producing works that adhered to a standardised formula he did not like. Cheng-Wei can be seen as an embodiment of the development, crisis and low point of the Taiwanese idol drama industry. He symbolises the creators in the industry whilst the Japanese artist is framed as an experienced forerunner. A similar message is conveyed in the 2008 Taiwanese film *Cape No. 7*, through a scene in which the talents of Taiwanese performers are recognised by a Japanese pop music star. *YLMS* cast the real star Fukuyama to play himself. This casting strategy was also used in *Cape No. 7* in which Atari Kousuke played himself. Such a scene is perceived as evidence of the Taiwanese collective desire to join the global world (S. C. Wang, 2009, pp.254-255). The message in this scene of *YLMS* further suggests that Japanese media may be a teaching agent with regards to the professional ethics and intelligence in the workplace regarding commercial cultural production.

### 6.2.3 Urban Subjects' Agency for Progress

Apart from the blending of the contemporary and historical relations between Taiwan and Japan, the third Japan-Taiwan relation is the sexual attraction between Taiwanese men and Japanese women. The two violinists of *AWC* are both attracted to Seiko in different contexts. Seiko and Ting-Yu share a common element of personal history: the absence of biological parents. When Seiko dates Ting-Yu to understand Lisa, Ting-Yu responds more out of loneliness and their commonality. For the different reasons (loneliness and trust gaining), Ting-Yu and Seiko can have sex without true love. *AWC* displays a more liberal stance towards premarital sex than the standard of East Asian TV drama. The depiction of the loneliness of contemporary urban subjects is more complicated than those in many other Taiwanese idol dramas that abide by Chinese Confucian values.

The previous section indicates that Siren is cursed, for many musicians who have played it are now either dead or in serious trouble. The Japanese owner cautions Ting-Yu not to play Siren before he is mentally and intellectually prepared, or Siren will lead him to death. But the cursed violin has mesmerised Ting-Yu; he ignores the advice and starts playing it. He has walked into Siren's curse. His love affairs with Seiko and his assistant create a scandal (the first trouble). His other trouble lies in his music career as mentioned previously. To boost the sales, his agent even replaces his performance recording with Hai-Chieh's music. Ting-Yu's reputation collapses when he confronts the mistake by revealing it himself. Although the Japan represented by the Japanese connoisseur is culturally and economically superior, it does not play the hope role for Ting-Yu. It is the power of his self-agency that offers him salvation. Similar to Seiko, who is rescued by her mother, Ting-Yu also is empowered by Lisa and, more importantly, his own will power. His personal struggle is represented in a scene where he falls and floats in the water. In his life and death struggle, he eventually recalls Lisa's advice. He comes to his senses, stands up on his own, and struggles to find a rehab centre. The recovered Ting-Yu stops playing music for commercialism. His individual agency frees him from Siren's curse, reinstalling moral order into a commercial cultural production.

The internal and personal struggle for career advancement is also shared by *YLMS*. The two on-screen thespians have played the role of lovers since the beginning of their careers, and gradually the love extends to reality. Cheng-Wei has functioned as a mentor to Man-Ling, guiding

her in her career. After seven years, Cheng-Wei is tired of these standardised love stories and his status quo. He also doubts if their love is authentic. Man-Ling tends to conform to the status quo. While Cheng-Wei is disrupting the operation of the star vehicle behind him, Man-Ling is standing on the opposite side. Their relationship is falling apart. Cheng-Wei is not a perfect problem resolver. Although he aspires to better works, he does not know how to achieve it in reality. The troubled star continues his work but his ill temper has ruined his work relationship with the industry. Cheng-Wei is diagnosed with depression.[99] Similarly, Cheng-Wei does not rely solely on Japanese advice – he gains strength during his recovery through his interaction with a local girl, Yi-Fang. The star, who cannot be understood by most members of the industry, starts having illusions and schizophrenic syndromes. At his mental health clinic, a mysterious girl approaches him. She understands all his agonies, despair and wishes. Later he realises that the girl appears only in his fantasy. After the girl disappears, he meets Yi-Fang who looks similar to the girl in his fantasy. Through his interaction with Yi-Fang he recalls that his fantasy girl developed from his high-school days. In the past, he cravenly ran away when his female classmate was wounded in an accident. He never returned, and buried the memory deeply inside. Her image appears in his subconscious to signify his past, which he is scared to face. The demystification of the image frees some parts of him and he gradually feels the courage to confront all loss and troubles. He pays back all the money lost and re-starts his acting career. Although he is sometimes rejected by a few people who presume he is arrogant and selfish, he is back to a healthier condition.

Japan is not the only reference of the Taiwanese artists in *YLMS*. Hong Kong obviously serves as another important mentorship for Man-Ling, who also finds the courage for reformation and transformation. She has been very dependent on other people's protection and guidance. When Cheng-Wei can no longer be her guide with regards to life and her profession, Man-Ling feels disoriented. On the one hand, she realises that she must give Cheng-Wei some space for himself, so she keeps her distance from him. On the other, she must learn to be independent.

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[99] In a scene of *YLMS*'s first episode where Cheng-Wei walks naked on the streets, his off-screen monologue presents the star's nightmare: "I feel that every day is the end of the world. Have you had such horror? No one is on the street. You are afraid that no one can talk to you. No one knows whether you are happy or sad. No one can share with you. No one is here for you to hate or love. So you could only scream at yourself because you are scared that the silence suggests that you are deserted by people...as if you are stripped naked to walk on the street. You are very sure that many eyes are watching you but you see no one. All things that I used to be familiar with became strange. I want protection but I do not know what can protect me. I grab anything that might give me a little comfort in this end of the world so that I can be a little less discouraged. I am looking for something although in the end I do not know what I am looking for".

She decides to go to Hong Kong alone, without her agent and assistant, for an advertisement shooting. In Hong Kong, the director of the advertisement notices her timid and reserved personality and asks her to do things that she would not have dared to do in the past. For instance, he asks her to go to several places in Central Hong Kong by herself and then invites her to sit on the street in public and interact with South East Asian migrant workers, who usually picnic in the public space of Central Hong Kong.

By constructing two characters experiencing professional and personal crises, *YLMS* gives a much more adult-oriented definition of love that is beyond typical Cinderella stories. The star couple Cheng-Wei and Man-Ling spend most of their time probing and questioning their seven-year intimate relationship. Most of their time together is filled with arguments and conflicts. They both also encounter someone who has the potential to become their new love interest. In the end, they reunite and realise that the true essence of love is to support another person in his or her life journey.

## 6.3 Encountering South Koreans

Since 2003, at least nine Taiwanese idol dramas have responded quickly to the popularity of South Korean media culture in the market by casting South Korean stars for leading roles. They are *Scent of Love* (2003), *Hi My Dear* (2003), *Love at Aegean Sea* (2004), *Amor de Tarapaca* (2004), *Silence* (2006), *My Combat Butler* (2011), *Extravagant Challenge* (2011), *My Perfect Boyfriend* (2012) and *Fondant Garden* (2012).[100] Most of the dramas erased their Korean cultural backgrounds by giving them ethnic Chinese characters. Only *Scent of Love* (hereafter *SL*), *Silence* and *Fondant Garden* (hereafter *FG*) cast South Korean actors to play South Korean characters who are situated in urban, cosmopolitan Taiwan. The first one was made by Virginia Liu and the following two by Angie Chai.

Briefly speaking, compared to the Taiwanese thematisations of reconciliation and reference in relation to the Chinese and Japanese, these interactions with South Korean media have displayed different themes. Similarly, the idol dramas draw on more or less historical and contemporary cultural relations between South Korea and Taiwan, including the existence of a

[100] I watched the dramas myself and noticed that they cast South Korean actors.

South Korean community in Taiwan and a Taiwanese community in South Korea. The people from South Korea are situated in urban Taiwan to manifest Taiwanese aspirations to be cosmopolitan and to be able to stand side by side with South Korea.

Yet the envisionings differ in terms of creativity and realism and convey different sets of social and gender values. Chapter 5 indicates that the two packagers differ in terms of their packaging styles and commercial orientation and their motives for using South Korean actors. Virginia Liu showed more cultural and historical commitment than Angie Chai. I argue that Liu made *SL* at a time when co-operating with and shooting in South Korea was rare and risky for Taiwanese idol drama and when South Korean media culture was fairly new to Taiwanese society. She carried out the drama at a time when idol drama was in its beginning. As her plan to interest Korean Broadcasting System for investment did not succeed, none of the South Korean or Taiwanese performers were A-list actors in either South Korea or Taiwan. Kim So-Yeon, who gained fame through her work in the South Korean drama *All about Eve* (2000), was the first choice for the heroine, but eventually actress Chu Ja-Hyun, who was relatively unknown in both Taiwanese and East Asian TV, was cast to play the tragic heroine, co-starring with Taiwanese talent Eddie Peng, who played the hero (Wu, 2003a; b). *SL* has more complex articulation. It is deeper in terms of its exploration of relationships and its characterisation. To communicate to South Koreans, *SL* explored reincarnation – the East Asian idea of life – and constructed a tragic heroine struggling against patriarchy and fatalism. It forms a significant contrast to Chai's TV dramas. I will explain later that *Silence* and *FG* took place when Taiwanese society was becoming familiar with South Korean media culture and made use of South Korean media talents without cultural commitment. *Silence* reproduced the gender roles *of Dae Jang Geum,* and *FG* reproduced that of *Meteor Garden*. With regards to class, the three idol dramas employing South Korean actors stage the romantic love stories across social classes. The heroes come from the upper class. The female protagonists are from the middle class, yet they have their jobs and business.

### 6.3.1 Situating South Koreans in Cosmopolitan Taiwan

*SL* purposefully displays a Taiwanese-Korean cultural and historical connection via an exploration on cultural (East) Asianness. The mediation is rarely seen in Taiwanese commercial media, whose cross-cultural narratives are usually either post-colonial or cross-Taiwan-Strait, and makes

this lesser-known drama worthy of academic attention. *SL* forges links between the traditional East Asian concept of reincarnation, Japanese colonial history and contemporary Taiwanese cultural interactions with South Korea. The drama revolves around a love triangle between the heroine Yin Hsiang-Chih, the hero Chin Cheng-Tian, and his competitor Pu Cheng-Chun, in their previous life in WWII and current, contemporary life. Contemporary South Korea and Taiwan are linked by ceramic art and film, represented by ceramic artists and film-makers from both societies. Living in Seoul (South Korea's capital city) with his potter father, Taiwanese Cheng-Tian meets his reincarnated lover Hsiang-Chih, a Taiwanese-Korean female film-maker, and his contester Cheng-Chun, a promising South Korean film-maker, at university. They contribute to filmic interactions between Taiwan and South Korea – for instance, film co-productions and film festivals at the university. Cheng-Tian's father Mr Chin symbolises the interaction of ceramic art between Taiwan and South Korea. In the drama, Mr Chin constantly travels in South Korea and Taiwan, teaching, researching and connecting.[101]

Angie Chai's production company is more market-driven, yet her personal resistance to dubbing means she gives actors characters which match the nationality and/or background of the stars, and sporadically draws on cultural reality (EP2, personal communication, Feb 23, 2013, p.9).[102] In *Silence*, which I previously reviewed, the focus is on South Korean food. Park Eun-Hye plays a Taiwanese-Korean woman living in Taiwan, alongside Hong Kong actor Andy Hui, who plays a Hong Kong immigrant. They run a small Korean food business.

For the consideration of the Taiwanese mass TV market, the South Korean and Hong Kong characters must communicate in Mandarin even though they present South Korean and Hong Kong identities. Thus the ethnic Chinese community in South Korea, the Korean community in Taiwan and Hong Kong people in Taiwan are utilised in *SL* and *Silence*. A number of Taiwanese individuals have had South Korean and Hong Kong backgrounds since the Cold-War period. Some *waishengren* people fled from mainland China via the Korean Peninsula to Taiwan, and

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[101] *SL* draws on the interaction of ceramic art between the two places. For instance, Yingge Ceramics Museum of New Taipei City, Taiwan, held the Forum of East Asian Ceramics "Ambient Green Flow: The Emergence and Rise of East Asian Celadon" (10 October 2011 – 4 March 2012) and "East Asian Contemporary Ceramics Exhibition" (15 November 2012 – 24 February 2013), displaying ceramic works from the PRC, South Korea, Japan and Taiwan (Yingge Ceramics Museum, 2011; 2012).

[102] This logic of casting foreign actors to play characters with their own backgrounds was quickly replicated by many of the other inter-Asian dramas of Chai, such as *Corner with Love* (2007), *Miss No Good* (2008), *Hi My Sweetheart* (2009), *Calling for Love* (2010), *Endless Love* (2010), and *Fondant Garden* (2012) (EP2, personal communication, Feb 23, 2013, p.9). In these cross-cultural dramas, contemporary Taiwanese protagonists would encounter other protagonists from different East Asian cultural backgrounds in their romantic engagements.

these people developed a trade route between South Korea and Taiwan (Y. Hsiao, 2000; Cheong, 2002). Individual contacts and movements between Hong Kong and Taiwan were also common during the period (*Apple Daily*, 2004). Yin Hsiang-Chih comes from an ethnic Chinese family living in South Korea. We can presume that the family is *waishengren*. *Silence* also draws on the ethnic diversity in urban Taiwan. With the perception of Hong Kong people living in Taiwan, writers of *Silence* designed Andy Hui's character:

> We designed his character as a Hong Kong person moving to Taiwan from Hong Kong. When the British handed over Hong Kong (to PRC), many Hong Kong people moved to Taiwan and opened restaurants, etc. We were thinking about the character in the context…We knew that Andy Hui was to play in the drama. We did not like that if we have Andy Hui to play a Taiwanese. Thus we designed his character as a Hong Kong man coming to Taiwan with his father. He came here at his teenage but he was born and grew up in Hong Kong. This design matched the reality of the time: many Hong Kong people immigrated to Taiwan. (S1, personal communication, Feb 4, 2013, p.12)

The two foreign residents in *Silence* are nonetheless not noticeably different from other more "authentic" Taiwanese individuals. This was because the writers did not stress the difference of the two characters with Taiwanese people (S1, personal communication, Feb 4, 2013, p.11). The writers did not see their heroine as an outsider from South Korea when they created her character:

> We regarded her as Taiwanese. Her nationality might be South Korean but she loves Taiwan and has grown up here (in Taiwan). She is a person who loves the place…just like many Americans living in Taiwan, who would tell you in Hokkien that "I am Taiwanese"…Her South Korean background was not what we wanted to discuss in this drama. (S1, personal communication, Feb 4, 2013, pp.10-11)

It may be argued that the foreignness of the two characters was acknowledged but the characters were treated as foreign people settling down in Taiwan. Just like dramas mentioned in above Japanese section, *Silence*'s construction of the two characters also strongly shows Taiwanese ideological desire for cosmopolitan community.

*FG* that was made eight years later than *SL* in 2011, mediates the two countries via Western baking. Taiwan and South Korea are both portrayed as westernised and urban. Its heroine, a Taiwanese baker, goes to Seoul for a baking contest and there meets the South Korean hero. The plot connotes South Korea being more central than Taiwan in the global economy. It is a new East Asian centre in which Taiwanese talents will go on to make a name for themselves.

### 6.3.2 Sporadically Drawing on National Relations

All the packagers of these three dramas had no obvious intention to create political metaphors although they drew on parts of the reality (S1 and S2, personal communication, Feb 4, 2013, p.3; S5, personal communication, Feb 12, 2013, p.16; P1, personal communication, March 26, 2013,

p.14). They did not take any particular political stance regarding Taiwanese national politics. The characters move between Taiwanese (such as the declaration “I come from Taiwan”) and Chinese-speaking cultural identities (such as the declaration “I am *Huaqiao* [meaning ‘ethnic Chinese’]”). Yet the narratives draw on, echo and hint the political, economic and cultural realities of the countries in drama backgrounds for dramatic motivations. Thus they still allude to political and economic relationships.

*SL* is narratively driven by the theme of reincarnated fate. The three protagonists all have two lives. Japanese colonial rule functions as the background of their first lives. In the first life, the previous reincarnations of Hsiang-Chih and Cheng-Tian fell in love in WWII Korea but their love was not accepted because Cheng-Tian’s previous analogue was a Japanese imperial soldier. Cheng-Chun’s previous analogue was the appointed fiancé to Hsiang-Chih. The forbidden love resulted in the death and curse of the fiancé, which contributed to the reincarnated destiny of the next life. *SL* glamorises the Japanese imperial soldier so that the heroine falls in love with him, thus increasing the dramatic conflict (for more details, see discussion in chapter 5.1). In present-day life, Taiwanese Cheng-Tian competes with Cheng-Chun again. His Japanese analogue won in the previous life. In this life, Cheng-Tian is dominated by Cheng-Chun. The three protagonists meet each other at the Chinese Language and Cultural Society at the university in Seoul. Cheng-Tian is much younger than Cheng-Chun (the elder founder of the society and a promising young film-maker adored by many young women) and Hsiang-Chih (the incumbent president of the society). Hsiang-Chih abides by the South Korean age system and respects Cheng-Chun very much. The younger, non-deferential Cheng-Tian is usually maltreated by Cheng-Chun, who rules the community by following South Korean ethical codes. An antagonistic relationship forms between Cheng-Tian and Cheng-Chun. The relationships of the male characters can be interpreted as allegories of the historical and contemporary competing relations between South Korea vs Japan, and South Korea vs Taiwan. Japan as a powerful colonial force over the colonised Korea forms the background of the first story.

*FG* served as the promotional vehicle of South Korean idol talent Park Jung-Min, who Chai’s South Korea-based company (CNR Media) contracted (Chu, 2010b).[103] Its narrative was driven by the production conditions. It constructed a South Korean rich young heir (played by Park) who

[103] CNR Media was co-invested by Angie Chai and the South Korea-based Roy Media (Chu, 2010b).

runs away from Seoul to Taipei for a vacation. In this fairly formulaic envisioning, the hero falls in love with Taiwanese urban culture, cuisine and people (to appeal to the market). Yet he is also in a personal and business conflict with his Taiwanese partner and kin – a crisis that he must resolve. Park's character reconciles with his Taiwanese friends, relatives and businesses. His company will support the Taiwanese side, stop cut-throat competition and co-operate in the global economy.

Male competition used by *SL* and *FG* is commonly seen in many idol dramas, as S5 commented in our interview (personal communication, Feb 12, 2013, p.21), but the plotting coincidentally echoes recent Taiwanese-Korean economic relations. Historically, South Korea and Taiwan did not have either historical animosity or close interaction, although they were in parallel positions as Japanese colonies, the "liberalist" frontier in the Cold War, and both were part of the "Four Asian Tigers". The 1950s' Korean War that eventually divided the Korean Peninsula into two separate countries also resulted in American protection of the KMT-ruled Taiwan from the socialist expansion. During the Cold-War period, the governments in Taiwan and South Korea shared a similar priority of anti-Communism and had an official diplomatic relationship. There were cultural interactions too. The Hong Kong and Taiwanese Chinese-language film-makers also had filmic interactions with South Korea. Hong Kong films were popular in South Korea during the 1970s and 1980s (Hyun, 1998). Chinese-language film-maker King Hu shot two feature films *Legend of the Mountains* (1979) and *Raining in the Mountain* (1979) in South Korea (Shih, 2009). Another Chinese-language film *Love and Farewell* starring Terry Hu, aka Hu Yin-Meng, was a Taiwanese-Korean co-production (Chiang, 2003).

In 1992, the South Korean government established diplomatic relations with the PRC. The ROC government was shocked and failed to respond to the harsh diplomatic reality. Mainstream Taiwanese public resentment against South Korea was planted since this setback (Ko, 2009b; Liu, 2015). During the 1997 Asian financial crisis, the South Korean economy was gripped and wounded. However, in the 2000s, South Korea became a stronger competitor of Taiwanese business in the global economy and similarly a stronger media cultural performer and a role model in the East Asian cultural market (Peng, 2008). Regarding the competition from South Korea in manufacturing and media culture, an anti-Korean sentiment rose in the Taiwanese male-dominated (cyber) public sphere and popular culture business in the 2000s (Yang, 2008a).

Fang-chih Irene Yang (2008a) has insightfully addressed two of Taiwan's male-dominated public media backlashes towards South Korea. The first is economic nationalism, which sees South Korea as a strong economic competitor and urges Taiwan to join the global and regional economic integration more aggressively to compete with South Korea. In this discourse, South Korea is depicted by the Taiwanese business elite as a sibling rival to Taiwan, which has shared a similar political history as two ex-colonies of Japan (two siblings to a colonial mother) and adopted similar roles in the division of labour in the post-WWII world system of manufacturing sectors. The second discourse vulgarly expresses cultural nationalism towards South Korean media culture, but nevertheless wants to emulate the experience of commercial success enjoyed by South Korean media culture in turning Taiwanese culture into an economic asset. Observing how Taiwanese female audiences watched and discussed South Korean TV dramas, Yang argues that Taiwanese pro-Korean opinions only appear in fan spaces. The relations between Taiwan and South Korea became complex and entangled although mainland China and Japan have remained important neighbours for Taiwan.

As for South Korea, the South Korean government stopped its diplomatic relations with the Taiwanese state in 1992 and established diplomatic relations with the PRC. Since then, it has treated Taiwan as well as Hong Kong as part of the pan-Chinese world. South Korean (cultural) business is concerned about how to continue the commercial success of South Korean (cultural) products in East Asia (including Taiwan) and even the world, while South Korean cultural nationalists have been articulating the commercial success of South Korean popular culture in East Asia (including Taiwan) as symbols of the excellence and competence of South Korean popular culture in expressing "Asian values" shared by a "Confucian East Asia" (Cho, 2011, pp.385-386). In other words, South Korea sees the shared characteristics between the pan-Chinese world (including Taiwan) and South Korea, through the lens of the popularity of South Korean media culture in the pan-Chinese world.

*FG* can be seen as a product targeting the fans of Park Jung-Min as well as Korean Wave. The drama articulates Park's public persona with the Taiwanese attitude towards South Korea against the larger social economic background where Taiwan has been in competition in many aspects, such as the manufacturing sector and media culture business, with South Korea. A common idea in Taiwan is that "Taiwan can lose to Japan but cannot lose to South Korea" (Ko, 2009b; Liu, 2015). For this part of Taiwan, Park's character forms a threat. The ideological

articulation of Park's character gives a clear message that he as a South Korean will co-operate with Taiwan, hoping to appeal to the Taiwanese part, and that Taiwan can survive in global competition, taking advantage of South Korean co-operation.

In summary, the antagonistic relations embodied by male characters in *SL* and *FG* are products of dramatic formulae, which nonetheless draw on and manifest deeply rooted collective attitudes and emotions. *SL* and *FG* did not intend to make any political allegories, but such political messages would still present because the dramas and their packagers were socially and contextually structured, as Raymond Williams (1977; 1982) notes.

### 6.3.3 Contesting Gender Roles

As chapter 2 mentioned, E. Ann Kaplan (1993, p.13) distinguishes two types of women-centred films for female audiences: women's melodrama is complicit in patriarchal ideology and emanates from a patriarchal position, and women's films foreground the female desire to resist the patriarchal framing of females. Pam Cook (1983, pp.252-253) agrees with a distinction between two positions, yet she refines the theorisation. She argues that the line between masculine and feminine viewpoints is unlikely clear-cut in female-centred films because the sexual difference is softened and merged so that a pure female voice hardly exists (1983, pp.252-253). Their theorisation about the ambiguous distinction between "women's melodrama" and "women's film" applies very well to the three Taiwanese-Korean idol dramas.

*SL* is a dramatisation of traditional East Asian ideas and values. The traditional concept of reincarnated destiny – that an individual's difficulties in this life might be because of his or her deeds in their previous life – links all parts of the story in *SL*. Reincarnation was a popular theme in Chinese-language female films in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Fore, 1993). At least three Hong Kong commercial movies *Dream Lover* (1986), *The Reincarnation of Golden Lotus* (1989) and *A Terracotta Warrior* (1990) depicted the lives of reincarnated protagonists. According to Steve Fore (1993), many 1980s' Hong Kong films wrestled with the dilemma of imported Western ideas mingling with traditional East Asian ideas in industrialised Hong Kong. Although East Asian society was importing Western ideas and new modes of socio-economic system, be it capitalism or socialism, traditional ways of thinking based on East Asian feudal/agrarian-based patriarchal values and norms remained strong. Moreover, the blending of Western capitalist-patriarchal notions with East Asian traditions had in some cases pushed East Asian women into a more

disadvantageous position as both systems have strengthened “the patriarchal status quo” and kept it from being questioned (Fore, 1993, pp.57-59).

It may be argued that reincarnated destiny is an idea of life in fatalism, which is a traditional philosophical doctrine rooted in East Asian feudal/agrarian-based patriarchal values and norms (Fore, 1993, p.59). For fatalists, everything happening in life can be due to fate. Although fatalism has many contextual appearances, it advocates subjects to submit themselves to fate, or external forces, and stop resisting the current order: people have no power to influence the future or their own actions, and what has been predestined is inevitable. It may be argued that the wide spread of reincarnated destiny and fatalism indirectly helps stable the existing order in East Asian societies.

As the East Asian existing order is made by the Confucian patriarchal value system, whether fatalism remains widespread or weakens is particularly relevant to women who lack power and might otherwise try and gain more autonomy. The Confucian patriarchal value system has remained strong in East Asian societies. East Asian patriarchal nation-states have defined Confucian patriarchal ideas, values and behaviour codes as a dimension of (East) Asianness and East Asian identity to explain the economic growth of the countries (Chua, 2004, pp.201-202). Yet some of the values (submission and collective respect) have been criticised as an ideological tool for the East Asian patriarchy to maintain social stability, noted by Eugkang Koh (2008, p.347). The traditional theory and its social system might become a source of repression for modern subjects and no longer interest women who identify themselves with modern and progressive values (Huang, 2008, p.199). Thus, the way romantic stories, films and TV dramas targeting women thematise fatalism/reincarnated destiny (whether they praise the idea or stimulate deep thoughts on it from audiences) is an issue for East Asian feminist media criticism (Fore, 1993; F.-M. Lin, 2006, pp.67-68).

To apply Kaplan’s categorisation, Hong Kong films involving reincarnation have used two approaches to the theme. The first and more commercially appealing, which is explicit in *A Terracotta Warrior,* mainly uses it as a plotting device for the romantic reunion of reincarnated lovers and has a happy ending. The East Asian belief is reinforced in this film – “women’s melodrama” in Kaplan’s definition. The second, which is displayed in *Dream Lover* and *The Reincarnation of Golden Lotus,* depicts the tragedy of reincarnated subjects who cannot overcome their fates. Using the case of *The Reincarnation of Golden Lotus*, Fore (1993, p.65)

argues that the female-focused film stages the melodramatic tragedy of a heroine, who is unable to transcend patriarchal normativity and conceive of a future alternative, so as to criticise East Asian patriarchal authority. The film – "women's film" in Kaplan's definition – criticises patriarchy, by showing reincarnation as source of female suffering and pinpointing the dilemma of the blending of Western and Confucian patriarchal value systems.

Although Fore's comment was referring to the late 1980s' Hong Kong films, his insights can also be applied to *SL* and East Asia in the 2000s. East Asian women have been receiving Western values by watching Western TV dramas, such as *Sex and the City*; yet they are still tied by traditional East Asian Confucian ethics and gender codes so that they hold an ambivalent attitude towards the sexual freedom in these Western dramas (Huang, 2008, p.199). They also treat the affluent lifestyles in *Beverly Hills 90210* more as a fantasy (Iwabuchi, 2002, p.148). These lead them to more adoptable and resonant TV dramas. Japanese and South Korean dramas became regionally popular because they provide the women with handy, adoptable templates in contemporary contexts – modern East Asian female models that manage an ideal compromise between traditional East Asian and imported Western values and gender codes, set in a modern East Asian city space (Iwabuchi, 2002, pp.144-151; Lin and Tong, 2008, pp.105-108; Zhu, 2008, p.95; Choi, 2010). In other words, refashioning and reaffirming East Asian values with a modern appearance – rather than abandoning them – is key for East Asian dramas to be popular among regional viewers. They are more of "women's melodramas" in this perspective, speaking to the desire of the individuals situated in a neo-Confucian patriarchal context by offering utopian templates that are complicit with Confucian and capitalist value systems.

*SL* thematised "reincarnation" because it wanted to build a bridge of understanding with South Korea.[104]

> I have always thought that reincarnation between previous and current lives is very interesting. I myself am very attracted to the subject-matter. When I wanted to co-operate with the South Koreans, I was thinking about what I should thematise in order to make a love between characters across diverse cultures strong and unbreakable. It seemed that the mysterious theme of reincarnation was an excellent idea…In South Korea there is a similar belief. I feel that basically all Asians have such a belief. Even Western psychology has taken up this idea. Drama should have some fantastic elements. It does not have to be just a romance in the current life…Human beings have always imagined all kinds of stories. (P1, personal communication, March 26, 2013, p.12)

[104] East Asian horror films also employ reincarnation in the plots. There have been other instances of East Asian screen makers using the theme of reincarnation when making an effort to seek inter-Asian cinematic cross-pollination, and to promote cultural ties between more geographically and politically distinct countries. In the omnibus horror film *Three* (2002), which was a "pan-Asian project" carried out by Thai, Hong Kong and South Korean film-makers, Thai director Nonzee Nimibutr also selected the concept as the main theme in his segment termed *The Wheel* (N. J. Y. Lee, 2011).

Yet *SL* did not appraise the East Asian value; instead it noted its suppression of the modern woman, combining the essence of *Dream Lover* and *The Reincarnation of Golden Lotus. SL* was a loose adaptation of *Dream Lover* and a South Korean popular novel called *Scent of Chrysanthemum*. The film gave *SL* the subject-matter of reincarnation, whilst the novel provided the structure of *SL*'s contemporary storyline (Nien, 2003; Power Generation Entertainment, 2004, p.153; P1, personal communication, March 26, 2013, p.10). This rarely-seen depiction shed light on the contradiction between modern/westernised East Asians (both Taiwanese and South Koreans) and the traditional way of thinking. *SL*'s centre is a sensible heroine Hsiang-Chih who is suppressed by East Asian patriarchal and capitalist value systems, struggles against them but fails to break the curse and the barriers they impose. This struggle concerning the individualities of East Asian women caught between progressive values, which advocate female independence, and traditional values (female submission and marriage), is encapsulated in the heroine. She undergoes a conscious transition from initially disagreeing with the old idea of life to finally surrendering to it. A few South Korean men who believe in this idea, e.g. an old fortune teller and an old traditional dance maestro, foresee her destiny and play important roles in guiding her to the doctrine. In the opening of *SL*, Hsiang-Chih is rushing to her society event when she collides with an old fortune teller who foresees her destiny. At that moment, she does not believe in the idea of reincarnated destiny and walks into her destiny, meeting Cheng-Tian and Cheng-Chun and starting their predestined cycle. The male characters are both driven by destiny. Cheng-Tian keeps dreaming about his previous life and is unconsciously driven by his fate. The fiancé cursed Hsiang-Chih and Cheng-Tian for the loss of his life. In this life, Cheng-Chun, driven by the curse, is trying to break Hsiang-Chih and Cheng-Tian. The central motif of predestined destiny in *SL* is emphasised again when, seven years later, an old South Korean traditional dance maestro foretells Hsiang-Chih's fate. At the time, Hsiang-Chih is more attracted to yet still confused at the telling of her destiny. Eventually when Hsiang-Chih sees her previous life via hypnosis, she starts associating the current love triangle with her past life and believes that her destiny in this life is to return what she owes back to Cheng-Chun.

In the meantime, Hsiang-Chih's film-making career is unsuccessful. Her other trouble concerns the challenge of being an educated woman struggling for more autonomy in South Korean society and the male-dominated film industry. The difficulty faced by film-makers in a profit-driven commercial industry is also depicted when Hsiang-Chih's boss puts commercial

pressure on her. She rejects working for a commercialistic South Korean film director of whom she does not regard highly. This plotting is for realistic motivation. Liu drew on her own observation on the gender division in South Korean show business and the wider society.

> In the South Korean society, women are in general inferior to men. So maybe it was an unconscious decision on my part to construct this heroine in this way. The gender inequality in South Korea has been worse than that in Taiwan. Comparatively speaking, Taiwanese society has a more equal gender relation. For instance, many Japanese friends have asked why there are so many female TV producers in Taiwan. There are fewer in South Korea and Japan. In South Korea many scriptwriters are women but there are few female directors…even fewer female producers. (P1, personal communication, March 26, 2013, p.15)

Unfortunately, for melodramatic motivation and consideration of South Korean market (for more details, see chapter 5.1), *SL* gives no hope to Hsiang-Chih, who had violated South Korean taboo and been cursed in her previous life. She cannot break the destiny in this life.

The South Korean gender relationship is quite traditional in *SL.* Cheng-Chun requests Hsiang-Chih to be his girlfriend without getting her approval in advance. He also pressurises her through her mother, who asks her to marry him and stop working as a bohemian documentary film-maker. Hsiang-Chih does not find much support and gives up on her besieged life out of despair. Facing all these difficulties, she indulges herself in alcohol and dies of cancer. In light of Fore (1993), I argue that, albeit *SL*'s melodramatic character, its construction of a tragic heroine encourages audiences to consider South Korea's patriarchal value system critically, but at the same time leads them to think about questions such as whether the heroine is really guilty of her deed, and whether she needs to pay for her previous sin in this life. In this regard, *SL* can be seen as a complicated combination of Kaplan's "women's film" and cross-cultural drama.

Whilst *SL* encourages its audience to think about the role of East Asian values in modern East Asia from multiple perspectives, *Silence* and *FG* reproduce the idealistic templates of the modern East Asian femininities in *Dae Jang Geum* and *Meteor Garden*. The sharp difference between Liu's and Chai's TV dramas that cast South Korean talents, indicates the gradual standardisation and market-driven inclination in the Taiwanese interactions with South Korean media culture.

The heroines of *Silence* and *FG* are both new figures of Cinderella who end up dating rich men. I have discussed in 6.1.3 that *Silence*'s characterisation of the heroine is subordinated to the official values of the PRC. Park Euh-Hye's character does not divert away from the Confucian gender codes in *Dae Jang Geum* that speaks to Chinese official values. *Silence* also presents the world of the rich, yet it holds an open stance regarding the heroine because she does not

marry to a rich person. *FG* is a romantic comedy. The heroine, played by Taiwanese actress Jian Man-Shu, is also a modern Cinderella, someone who is strong-willed and financially independent, on the one hand, and tender, considerate, faithful and willing to sacrifice, on the other. She is a talented cake baker, who goes to Seoul for a baking contest where she meets the South Korean protagonist. Like the heroines in many South Korean and Taiwanese romantic comedies, e.g. *Full House* or *Meteor Garden*, she lives happily with the young rich South Korean man in the end.

*Silence* and *FG* provide utopian fantasies that speak to East Asian women's desires in a neo-Confucian East Asian context, yet they do not pinpoint the problems of the new dilemma of East Asian femininity – the difficulty in balancing between patriarchal family values and personal career. Women joining the workforce in fact satisfice the demands of capitalism; yet women also need to meet the social expectation of entering into marriage (Fore, 1993; Lin and Tong, 2008, pp.111-114). *Silence* and *FG* reveal women's desires, yet they are still "women's melodramas" that are complicit with the patriarchal capitalist value system. Their ambiguous attitude towards patriarchal capitalist value applies to Pam Cook's (1983) argument that the two types of women's TV dramas towards patriarchal values are not clear-cut. Women's melodrama and the patriarchal capitalist value system evolve to address and incorporate the new desires of women.

## 6.4 Conclusion

This chapter interprets the inter-Asian imaginations in Taiwanese idol dramas. It is aimed at understanding both the complicit and critical stances the dramas are taking towards the three dominant forces of East Asia (patriarchy, nationalism and capitalism/commercialism). I have chosen three groups of bilateral imaginations, each of which covers two to three works made at different historical moments. Briefly speaking, they are overall adherent to the dominant systems, yet they have different breakthroughs in different aspects. The dramas penetrated by the dominant pro-American, globalised, Taiwan-centric and anti-Communist ideology in contemporary Taiwan, have placed those inter-Asian subjects in a multicultural, post-colonial, post-Cold War, globalised and urban Taiwanese backdrop. The dialogues as a whole are diverse, seemingly open-ended and even contradictory, usually composed of several social, economic and cultural bilateral and sometimes multilateral inter-Asian encounters. The narratives form a multi-faceted system of images that together draw on and represent the Taiwanese economic,

political and cultural relations with other East Asian counterparts in the backgrounds. The mediated Taiwanese "East Asian relations" are by no means singular. They vary according to their contexts and are characterised by the temporally specific demands made of themselves and their counterparts and artists they utilise. Focusing on one singular bilateral expression, such as Taiwanese-Chinese or Taiwanese-Japanese, would not holistically display the multiple inter-Asian networks that Taiwanese society is situated in.

The Taiwanese perspective of East Asia should be understood as an entity composed of several blocs with various degrees of relevance, ranging from the politically and ideologically contradictory PRC, culturally influential Japan, parallel South Korea, not-very-relevant South East Asia, and mysterious (ex-) Communist bloc.

Lila Abu-Lughod's (2004) argument that women-oriented TV dramas are ambiguous "performative subjects" of a post-colonial patriarchal nationalist discourse, is applicable in this chapter. The chosen dramas do not turn to anarchism. They selectively absorb the KMT and DPP's national discourses to articulate the cultural and national differences or tensions between the nations and therefore provide templates concerning values and identities that their target audiences in Taiwan and other East Asian countries can identify with and comprehend. As a commercial and mainstream media product, the idol dramas' expressions are the negotiated versions of the dominant ideological and value systems in the PRC, Japan and South Korea. Economically, they serve the interests of both Taiwanese and non-Taiwanese media businesses. Their cultural and historical accounts appear sporadically in the dramas' backgrounds but are constrained by commercial rules. The otherness of foreigners is controlled so that the dramas can focus on their main themes. They do not lead their audiences to face irresolvable regional differences and difficulties, such as foreign characters having extreme difficulties when settling in Taiwan. Instead, they address the economic and cultural imperatives of interactions and co-operations.

Among a large number of Taiwanese-Chinese idol dramas, including those that are completely funded by and tailored to the PRC market, only a few have cross-cultural envisionings. Socio-economic and cultural reconciliations with various PRC subjects have been common in the envisionings. Such reconciliations usually take place between local Chinese individuals and a Taiwanese capitalist figure that is expanding business in the PRC. The dramas avoid offending the globally hegemonic political discourse of contemporary Chinese officialdom with regards to

Taiwanese political identity. Resistant political expressions indicating potential political controversies, or any activities related to the Taiwanese independence movement, are absent in these dramas.

The exhibitions of the Taiwanese who interact with the Japanese in Taiwanese-Japanese idol dramas, have served Japanese promotion to the East Asian markets of its various forms of soft power, such as tourist places and media culture. The Taiwanese idol drama industry, on the other hand, capitalises on Japanese elements to appeal to the domestic interest in Japanese modernity. Taiwanese-Japanese idol dramas draw on the overlapping post-colonial and globalised connections. Japan is envisioned as an expert to whom the Taiwanese reference. The Japanese who settle down in Taiwan in the dramas address the Taiwanese desire to be cosmopolitan. Female Japanese characters are framed as being more malleable in terms of their ethnic identification and tend to treat Taiwan as home. Male Japanese characters played by actors based in the Japanese media industry, act as authoritative figures towards the Taiwanese with regards to culture; their interactions have little relevance to ethnic hybridisation.

The displays in Taiwanese-Korean co-operations of Taiwanese interactions with South Korean elements also build upon the consumption of South Korean media culture in globalised Taiwan that welcomes another form of East Asian modernity. These dramas exploit the surplus of the market value of South Korean media culture which has cashed in by sending its talents to perform in other East Asian media. Interacting with South Koreans is different from interacting with Taiwan's ex-coloniser, Japan, its political adversary, PRC, or its not-so-relevant South-East Asian neighbours in the collective imaginations of Taiwanese society. The PRC and Japanese elements are usually related to reconciliation and reference but less familiar South Korean ones are bridged with a common East Asian root. South Korea as a similar, parallel but unfamiliar non-ethnic-Chinese East Asia, has generated Taiwanese interest in exploring traditional East Asian value or (East) Asianness, which the Taiwanese would not think of when interacting with Chinese, Japanese or South-East Asians. The thematisation of reincarnated fate in *SL* suggests that South Korea provides a gateway to (East) Asianness in the imaginations of Taiwan. The Taiwanese also draws on its past and present relations with South Korea in the idol dramas. The South Koreans are situated in cosmopolitan Taiwan. The competing relation between Taiwan and South Korea is represented by male characters for dramatic motivation.

In terms of social values and individualities, idol dramas are more of the hegemonic articulations of capitalist values. Stuart Hall's (1974; 1982; 1986a; 1989) critique to mass media applies in the idol dramas. Working-class men and their discourse hardly exist. Yet these social and gender expressions vary according to the target markets' values. Some give mild critique to capitalism, e.g. the works mentioned above in the Japanese section.

The representations of the vulnerable in *Silence* and *FW* emanate from capitalist hegemonic articulation. The value system of capitalism dominates in the articulations connecting the upper class with other social groups. A rich male or female protagonist has been very common in the idol dramas that are strongly attached to urban consumerism as a showcase for urban wealthy lifestyles. The rich protagonists would encounter other characters of lower socio-economic status in their regional travels, including heroines coming from the middle or working class. They address the socio-economic groups that are economically inferior to them. Cultural workers and performers, who make names in show business, have also been popular professional choices for main characters because they have quite transnational lifestyles and work experiences. They are also central in the new economy of the world.

Capitalist values are less dominant in Taiwanese-Japanese idol dramas. The dilemma of the contemporary economic system is more evident in those dramas that probe the internal conflicts of urban characters. Co-productions with the Japanese have had more space to address the complicated intimate relationships of modern urban subjects. The Japanese market also offers space for genres concerning marginal figures such as gangsters. The troubles of the urban subjects do not come from socio-economic tension. Constructing internally conflicting urban characters struggling in crises, such as contemporary cultural workers and gangsters, complicates the process of the urban subjects' road to salvation and appraises the significance of individual agency to fight against negative forces in a capitalist society.

The Taiwanese-PRC co-productions usually express more conservative values towards gender roles since the PRC TV ethos is largely controlled by the state. Gender is also a big issue in the Taiwanese-Korean dramas. The dramas either speak to female desires with idealistic modern East Asian femininities that satisfy the traditional East Asian value system and capitalist value system, or reveal the contradiction in this social expectation towards the femininities. The mediated communication with the South Korean market in *SL* also negotiates with South Korean patriarchal nationalism. The Asianness (such as the idea of reincarnated destiny), which is rooted

in traditional values and organisational norms, is seemingly a source of repression for progressive East Asian women demanding more autonomy in *SL*. *SL*'s complex signification may serve as a perfect space for us to ponder the role of traditional East Asian values on contemporary East Asian women.

# Chapter 7 Conclusion

## 7.1 Scattered Hegemonies, Globalisation and Commercial Drive

The main focus of my thesis is the inter-Asian packaging and mediated articulations of idol drama from Taiwan in the twenty-first century. I shall conclude this research by elaborating its three definitive characteristics: scattered hegemonies, globalisation and commercial drive. Briefly speaking, Taiwanese idol drama's inter-Asian packaging has articulated several similar but different hegemonic forces located inside Taiwan and in East Asia in an age of globalisation in the logic of commercialism. Responding to the geo-politically and historically constituted forces, the mediated articulations, via the dramas, contradict yet overlap with each other.

The thesis argues that "fragmentation", or positively speaking, heterogeneity, has become a shared characteristic of Taiwanese politics, society, TV production and imagination. To begin with, Taiwan has been the target of various stronger countries that have tried to become leaders of East Asia over the last two centuries. Some of these were traditional opponents, and some were new East Asian patriarchal political regimes that experienced (Western, Sino or Japanese) imperialism in different ways. They were/are the Old Sino Empire, the Japanese Empire, the KMT and the CCP.

After WWII, several patriarchal nationalist forces were scattered throughout the region. Their emergences and discourses are historically and geo-politically conditioned by Western imperialism, global capitalism and regional power relation. The patriarchal nationalist discourses are in continuous competition for resources. They are both similar and different on multiple levels, coded along specific sexual, geo-political and cultural axes, so that the dominance of their values needs to be analysed at multiple levels. They are also full of contradictions when interacting with each other.

Firstly, the geo-politics before and during colonial and Cold-War periods affected and were internalised by Taiwanese subjectivity. The latter may have split into even smaller internal political factions that stood with specific larger neighbouring forces. The pattern of contestation between these domestic political factions structurally corresponds to that of larger geo-politics in the region. After WWII, a post-colonial patriarchal authoritarian government (KMT) ruled this small country for almost sixty years (1945-2000) and stood with the US, exchanging American protection with its own resources (militarily strategic position, labour, etc.) during the Cold War. It implanted the

two most determining ideologies into Taiwanese society: pro-Americanism and anti-Communism. After the 1970s, it gradually lost political legitimacy and could not suppress opposition forces as before. Its major oppositional force – the DPP and Taiwanese nation-building movement – emerged in the 1980s. The DPP challenged the KMT, leading to the latter's relative decline. Since then Taiwan has been split into more than two political discourses. These two domestic patriarchal nationalist and capitalist political forces have competed to rule Taiwan since the late 1980s, the dawn of globalisation. Though the DPP contested against the Sino-centric KMT, it nevertheless internalised the KMT's pro-Americanism and anti-Communism. In short, the KMT and the DPP are "small", and under the influence of regional and global powers.

Secondly, the KMT would be pressurised by both foreign and domestic forces for deregulation of the value-laden, commodity-form media that it once controlled. These forces included neo-liberalist Western media groups, bottom-up domestic political groups, and even the cultural groups who shared similar values but had different commercial interests. In the complicated network of relations, the contestation of larger politics would relay "down" to cultural fields. But the relaying effect did not produce absolutely corresponding patterns in the cultural fields, with the result that the cultural fields looked relatively autonomous.

The homologous transition of TV was not much in evidence in the 1980s and unfolded starkly during the 1990s, partially reflecting the political contestation during the 1980s and early 1990s. Yet three other forces pressed the KMT to open up the TV market previously oligopolised by its three terrestrial TV stations (the Old Three). The Taiwanese media enterprises holding the anti-KMT political stance founded their new TV stations. Another domestic commercial force came from Taiwanese media entrepreneurs who intended to expand into the overseas ethnic-Chinese media market, especially the PRC – these people were also planning to build their own international media businesses. The third force was transnational satellite TV that utilised popular foreign programmes to expand into the Taiwanese market. In this period of deregulation, other foreign imports also benefited. Non-profit TV, including the public TV system and religious TV stations, were founded at the time. These social bodies were much minor in the competition of discursive power in Taiwanese public; yet they managed to found their own TV channels in the late 1990s.

Thirdly, various cultural production fields (e.g. TV as a field and TV drama as TV's sub-field) had their own conditions and principles of operation. The access of new groups to a specific

cultural field depended on the field's nature and operational principles. If art film and public TV programming were closer to resistant and critical mediated articulations in their respective fields, commercial film and idol drama adhering to commercial principles were more mainstream, complicit with the dominant discourses. Competing with each other according to specific principles, producers in the field of idol drama produced their TV dramas that were also in a range between mainstream and marginal, dominant and resistant, and complicit and critical expressions.

Cut-throat competition in the TV industry caused the fragmentation of TV consumption in Taiwan in the 1990s. Female consumption of TV drama was divided into four main categories. Teenagers and women in their 20s were particularly interested in the Japanese star-centred dramas that gave them modern East Asian templates for their values and daily lives at the time. Married and older women were targeted by three main groups of TV dramas: Sino-centric historical dramas; localist multi-episode dramas with a Taiwanese background; and foreign TV dramas, especially those from South Korea. These three drama sources disseminated more traditional family values than the Japanese and US products.

In the 2000s, domestic variety-show producers who worked in the Old Three, turned to drama production. The new drama producers worked together with new directors and scriptwriters in order to win back domestic female youngsters in their teens and early 20s by adapting a light romantic Japanese manga and copying Japanese TV drama's aesthetics. The pioneering work *Meteor Garden* successfully addressed female desire and class anxiety in both Taiwan and other relatively developing countries in East Asia, by means of utopian heterosexual romantic fantasy. It also created regional interests for Taiwanese TV products as a supplement to Japanese and South Korean products.

As its target audience very much overlapped with those of both Japanese and South Korean TV dramas, the latter succeeded in expanding its audience base to teenage female audiences around the mid-2000s. The increasingly competitive regional market and deteriorating domestic production conditions pushed the Taiwanese drama producers to, firstly, expand their target audience to women in their early 40s and, secondly, adopt more patterns of inter-Asian packaging that made flexible use of foreign production means. Thus my fourth finding is that, situating in a laissez-faire market, these Taiwanese media production agents started resorting to strategic international "co-operations" – an exchange of production means. They would establish many forms of bilateral or trilateral exchange relations between owners of capitals, talent and skills, etc.

The packagers chose to ally and connect themselves with particular foreign co-operators in specific ways, according to their strategies and the interests of the potential co-operators. This also implies that a packaging agent could find it hard to form an "ideal" alliance with some resource owners whose more valuable resources were also pursued by other idol drama packagers. So a packager had to keep making efforts to attract better foreign co-operators.

These Taiwanese idol drama packagers have taken several directions of inter-Asian commercial exchanges at different moments. They have tactically made use of other East Asian media enterprises and also been used by the latter. South East Asia, the PRC and Japan, have been important funding sources for them over the last decade and early 2010s. The funding distributors exchanged their market bases for, firstly, the distribution rights of Taiwanese idol dramas and, secondly, the exposures of their own domestic talents to the region via debuts in the dramas. Japanese talent agencies, which used to be not interested in overseas performing, also started to let their own talents debut in Taiwanese idol drama. Overall, Taiwan's idol drama's advantage was its smaller regional popularity and visibility. Japanese and South Korean collaborators have traded with the packagers their production means: stories (manga), actors and settings which are sought after in Taiwanese and East Asian female markets.

Fifth, most of the packagings oscillate on spectrums ranging between dominant and resistant, mainstream and marginal, conforming and critical articulations, significantly depending on the partners they exchange resources with and their articulation approaches. Commercial mediated articulations are formed in a choric manner while those with less commercial drive tend to express criticism. A unity of consensus forms a linkage between one foreign co-operator and one domestic packager (both of whom represent the interests of their own national and social cultural groups) on both the differences and similarities of their value systems (patriarchal, nationalist and capitalist spirits). Yet one linkage might contradict another, so the field is not without contestation: packaging groups must defend themselves for legitimacy, which mainly concerns their foreign co-operators and packaging strategies.

Chapter 5 examines four inter-Asian packaging strategies in idol drama that locate generally closer to the mainstream axis on the spectrum mentioned above. Their packagers' personalities, preferences, vision and strategies locate at different positions on the spectrum. These packagings have two main forms of inter-Asian contestation: one horizontal and another vertical. Horizontal contestation refers mainly to the competition from the idol dramas made by drama producers that

adopt different strategies. Vertical contestation refers to negotiation between the managerial and creative sides. The negotiation forms an articulation of the dominant and the dominated, more precisely, two sets of vertical articulations (the first one between Taiwanese packager and non-Taiwanese partner, and the second between the packager and members of packaging team). It happens when drama workers hold beliefs and creative ideas that are different from that of their leader and also different from their foreign co-operator. The drama workers would experience suppression from the leader because they do not share similar schema with each other. As the managerial packagers generally incline to compromise in favour of the dominant group, the drama workers holding non-mainstream ideas are tamed, in the inter-Asian packagings. If they do not leave the project, they can either contest or negotiate with the dominant. The situation is applicable with Hall's theory that in mass media, the dominant discourse will negotiate with the non-mainstream voice but the latter remains in subordination (Hall, 1974; 1982; 1986a; b; 1989).

Sixth, commercial productions are in general "conservative" – adopting melodramatic convention, conforming to patriarchal nationalist and capitalist values, and inclining to depoliticisation. However, they never completely obey all the dominant forces of the region. Rather, they have varying and contextual scales of criticality and conformity because the patriarchal nationalist discourses they have encountered were also temporally and spatially constitutive, dominant and dominated in different contexts. Also, these discourses can be contested by commercialism that wants to appeal to suppressed social groups, leaving the Taiwanese idol dramas in a grey area where they cannot really distance themselves from the East Asian scattered patriarchal nationalist capitalist value systems. They might provide a "petite mild critique", showing "flexible conformity" to the regionally hegemonic forces – which is one of their ways to unconsciously participate in regional political discussion.

Taiwanese women's TV markets have not been keen to include politics into the background of dramas, probably because the two main domestic political parties (the KMT and DPP) and the PRC have not given enough opportunity for the women to talk about their ideas. The idol drama that addresses women and is sometimes made by women, has avoided national politics, and shows a tendency to denationalisation. The drama may well be set in a fictional background and only focuses on class and gender issues. This can be seen as its contextually escapist spirit. Yet

women would not automatically share nationalist discourses when they at times talked.[105] Transnational backgrounds appear in some of the commercial TV dramas alongside the contingency of globalisation. Their articulations are juxta-political and in the background, with varying scales of emphasis. Still, these narrations do not strongly endorse a nationalist discourse. They emanate ambiguously from a political discourse instead, responding to and articulating another nationalist discourse. Some of the packaging of idol dramas shows interest in cross-cultural interaction and a critical spirit. The absence of historical cultural backgrounds in Tsai Yueh-Hsun's works does not absolutely mean a lack of criticality in any aspects.

Chapter 6 analyses seven idol dramas that articulate in their mediations various bilateral or trilateral linkages between Taiwanese factions and their foreign co-operators, in different historically and spatially specific contexts. The seven dramas are different with each other in terms of their conformity to patriarchal, nationalist and capitalist values of Taiwan and the co-operating country, and their differences are exactly a demonstration of cultural contestation, as chapter 5 indicates. Their manifestations of criticality vary on different levels with different scales. Whilst some of the cross-cultural narratives are very much in line with dominant values, such as *Fondant Garden*, most of them negotiate with the existing ideas, social values and political discourses of the similar yet different East Asian patriarchal nationalist capitalist regimes. One that is more cutting-edge in social and gender values may be subordinated to the funding market's dominant discourse about national relationships (such as *Scent of Love*, *Alice in Wonder City*, *You Light up My Star* and *Gangster's Bakery*). *Scent of Love* dares to explore cross-cultural debate, provoking thoughts and cross-cultural understanding. Targeting Japanese markets, *Alice in Wonder City* and *You Light up My Star* reveal the contradictions of the capitalist system. *Silence* shows a mild critique of domineering patriarchal capitalism, and depicts mildly progressive femininity (no longer Cinderella but a mix of Cinderella and Gaia). It addresses how the Taiwanese see themselves in relation to the PRC and the Taiwanese aspiration to become a multicultural and cosmopolitan society. Yet as the PRC's state-approved TV system became more tightly monitored by its government with neo-Confucian policy, the patriarchal capitalist values, that are also shared by

[105] In fact, women are talking. In the study of Eva Tsai (2007, pp.143-144), ethno-nationalist contestation between the KMT, the DPP and the PRC is becoming considered by a number of Taiwanese and Chinese women as an "irrational source" of chaos and disaster in their opinion.

the patriarchal values of Taiwan, dominate the signification of the Taiwanese idol dramas that received PRC funding for this market, such as *Fathers' War*.

## 7.2 Self Critique and Future Research Directions

The research is my attempt to make sense of Taiwanese TV dramas' multiple bilateral linkages with non-Taiwanese East Asian societies and media in a globalisation age. The production of meaning on the audience's side is beyond the current scope of the research. I focused on the production side, which is never the end of the production of meaning, which is realised by the receiving individuals. I had some discussions about the female-oriented dramas' responses to patriarchal, nationalist and capitalist value systems when examining the dramas in the textual analysis. But they are only from my subjective interpretation, which is only one node (probably a more critical one aiming to disrupt mainstream interpretation of mass media) in the whole circuit of meanings, where audiences, who watch TV drama in a more ordinary setting, play key roles.

The analysis of the packagers' strategies and mediations mainly accounts for how idol drama's inter-Asian packaging and mediated articulations have realised diverse economic and cultural imperatives from the perspective of Taiwanese economy, TV industry of female TV dramas, and commercial media workers, some of whom are also female. Inspired by Pierre Bourdieu (1993) and Stuart Hall (1974; 1982; 1986a; b), I have illustrated the horizontal competitions between idol drama production companies and vertical contestations between Taiwanese packaging members and their foreign co-operators. These competitions and contestations are also inter-Asian because they are related to the other East Asian societies and media cultures.

Bourdieu's study of symbolic production was designed to examine how social relations would be structurally and homologously relayed to cultural production (1977; 1984; 1993). Chapter 5 noted the contesting relations between packagers and their different strategies (commercial localism, PRC co-production, adapting Japanese manga, global culture making and narrative inter-Asian drama). The research points out the significance of several parameters, such as gender, ethnicity, seniority and work history in the inter-Asian packagings. The packagers and packaging members come from the ethnicities of *waishengren* or *benshengren*; they are women and men who come from different generations and started their careers at different times. All of

the factors influenced their personalities, imaginations about the female audience, strategies and end products. Yet the research did not fully unpack the homologous relation between political and cultural fields: how the field of idol drama is homologously related to the political environment both domestic and regional. It is difficult to have an ultimately scientific answer since contemporary female-oriented dramas are very sophisticated works and are over-determined by many factors. The making of a drama is mainly decided by its producer, but at the same time it is still full of chaos, accidents, and emergencies. Besides, the people also change in themselves throughout their work history, adapting to the emergent social values in market competition.

Nonetheless, this does not prevent us from delving into TV packagers' personal details and foreign linkages in the field. Perhaps fuller answers to this research question could be obtained if the research could carefully, or even fully, de-anonymise information of the participants, including their personal backgrounds and experiences/trajectories, their views of the industry and their unique strategies. This further theorisation of the homology between female TV drama and male-centred national politics would need careful arrangement of the information of participants. As many Taiwanese TV workers might use camouflage and thereby produce a polysemic articulation or interpretation at the time, in the thesis, I decided to anonymise most of my informants in order to protect them, although only some of them requested for partial anonymity. Alternatively, the question could probably be answered in a research that fully anonymises the information.

## 7.3 The Future of Inter-Asian Commercial Packagings of Taiwan

Living in an era in which crossing a border is a frequent and even daily experience for many East Asians, critical analysts need to keep an eye on inter-Asian images, discerning complicity, conformity and criticality in the works, as Shu-mei Shih (2007, p.191) calls for. "Narrative inter-Asian drama" is likely to remain an emergent subject-matter in avant-garde art and art-house cinema in East Asia because such narrations depict the contemporary reality of the region. Yet, I am more curious about how commercial packaging would absorb this theme, as mass media's evolution as "mass mediations of popular and emergent values and ideas" shows the general transformation of a society. Will the inter-Asian packaging of multinational elements remain a commercially profitable operation? Or is it more likely to be only a short-term phenomenon (in Taiwan) that will eventually be replaced by "the PRC co-productions"? And how should we

perceive the PRC co-productions? Analysing its future development or disappearance provides a way to see the transformation of a larger part of society, rather than only a small number of individuals.

Cultural workers and their industries are tied to their environment through several levels of sociality: political economy, creative convention and the workers' own personal consciousness. The future of Taiwan's inter-Asian packaging may well be over-determined by multi-level factors coming from different geo-cultural locations. The first group of factors are the Taiwanese domestic conditions for cultural imaginations, including the political ideological atmosphere and market structure of TV. Over the past years, "vernacular" cosmopolitanism has been identified in Taiwanese avant-garde art that counters authorities such as the political ideologies, gender oppression and exploitation of third-world labour and their intersecting impacts upon Taiwanese gender and social minorities (Shih, 2007, p.175). Politically, not only Taiwanese politicians, but Taiwanese individuals too refuse to lose political autonomy under the arrangement of Beijing's governance (Kaeding, 2014). Moreover, emergent social, gender, civil and student movements have sufficed to explain the lack of appeal of ethno-patriarchal nationalisation (from the existing discourses of either KMT or the DPP) for the younger Taiwanese generation (Sang, 1999; Kaeding, 2014, p.120; Rawnsley and Feng, 2014; Wu, 2015, p.293). These street movements will also influence new media workers. Yet, whether older political leaders will address the new urges is unknown. As Taiwan is expecting its next presidential election in January 2016, the new political leader, who is presumed to address and represent the Taiwanese collective will, will have administrative authority to influence the development of Taiwanese society and culture.

The institutional factors of TV and the market, and the funding structure of idol drama are also determinate. This industry needs to maintain its capacity. Currently it relies on the international market (in particular the PRC), state subsidy and domestic TV advertisement (including product placement). Yet a larger overseas market whose mainstream values are becoming traditional, in conflicts with the emergent demands of a Taiwanese society that asks for further modernisation. The Taiwanese social and gender movements have been changing the collective mind-sets of society and its young generation to become more and more locally engaging and distanced from the neo-Confucian policy of the Sino-centric patriarchal nationalist authority in the PRC. Although the ownership fights for the Old Three came to an end, political contestation between the KMT and DPP is still at a high level in Taiwan. Conforming to any of the

two patriarchal nationalist forces is likely to direct the production system towards a different cultural imagination or nationalisation, serving the political economic interests of ethno-nationalist government and domestic business. Thus a healthy public broadcasting system that addresses local social and gender issues and minorities is strategically important.

Secondly, the condition of other national media in the region will influence the existence and narrations of Taiwan's inter-Asian packaging, which emerged contingently at the conjuncture of domestic deregulation and the regional and international trade market. Taiwan's inter-Asian packaging took place largely when the PRC did not have domestic commercial productions targeting its female youngsters. In the changing and dynamic East Asian mass media market, success could come and go in only a few years. The competition from stronger media systems whose countries are also vying for soft power over the region is likely to extinguish Taiwanese hopes for survival. Developing strong national media systems and snuffing out the space of a small country and its media is an inevitable road for regional leadership for East Asian countries. The media industry in a small country in general is at a disadvantage in such free market competition.

Taiwanese media might be too small to impact these stronger media. Its regional operation can only take advantage of the dynamism of big countries. Among the four types of inter-Asian activities of Taiwanese commercial TV workers presented in chapter 5, co-production with the PRC media is the most frequent, yet is controversial. How will the affluent PRC market influence Taiwan's inter-Asian packaging in the future? The PRC entertainment market has been driving media workers from Hong Kong and Taiwan day by day (Yeh, 2010b; Chua, 2012b, p.19; Curtin, 2013). This market, which is also competed for by the media business of other more developed countries, has become very dynamic and unpredictable. The PRC administers nationalistic protection of its own culture products that also vie for the same end result (export and influence) (Lee, 2010; 2012; Chua, 2012b, p.20; Hu and Ji, 2012; Keane and Liu, 2013). Will the Chinese patriarchal neo-Confucian policy and market force orient the commercial media of societies which are considered by it as "domestic parts" (such as Hong Kong and Taiwan), back towards a Sino-centric standardisation (Shih, 2007, p.191) and suppress Taiwanese female desire for a more progressive way of life?

Concerning this issue, film-makers from Hong Kong have been searching for possible ways to engage with the larger country. Previously, there were worrying and resistant statements, made

by Hong Kong film scholars, calling for attention to the "renationalisation" or "re-Sinicisation" of Hong Kong film industry. Seeing inter-Asian packager Peter Ho-Sun Chan choosing to relocate in the PRC and mainly address the country's nationals after the late 2000s decade, Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh (2010b) judges it as a deferral of commercial inter-Asian packaging of Hong Kong films. Michael Curtin (2013) notes it as the renationalisation of the Hong Kong film industry caused by the PRC film market force. Their controversial comments aim to raise more political concern about the cultural rights of Hong Kong under its gradual transition in the regional and global power structure. Yet so many factors are at work that, at the moment, cosmopolitan inter-Asian narrations in the recent inter-Asian packaging initiated by Hong Kong film-makers still exist, such as *Shadows of Love* (2012), *12 Chinese Zodiac* (2012) and *To the Fore* (2015). Hong Kong's commercial packaging may keep the identities of Hong Kong, but cannot attend to marginal social and gender issues, which are likely seen in the art-house films of Hong Kong (such as the works of Fruit Chan, Pang Ho-cheung, Tsang Tsui-Shan etc.) which, influenced by the economic rise of the PRC, struggle to critically articulate the region.

My research findings indicate equally complicated interactions between the PRC and Taiwan. In the commercial economic network, Taiwanese TV producers inevitably get involved in the fundamental transformation of the region and the world for many reasons. One reason is that the PRC can make use of Taiwanese know-how and specialty, and another is that the South Korean and Japanese media are interested in getting the Chinese-speaking market via Taiwan. Culture (e.g. symbolic and intellectual activity) is argued to be one of the rare tools by which subjects from Taiwan can influence the region and the world (Shih, 2007, p.170). In the intellectual realm, Kuan-Hsing Chen (2010) and Jieh-min Wu (2009, pp.151-152; 2012) call for critical forms of Taiwanese engagement with PRC society; Chen proposes intellectual activism and Wu calls for criticism of the collusion of cross-Strait political economic interest groups and attention to labour exploitation and gender oppression in the PRC.

So what kinds of strategies have been emerging from the commercial cultural industry of Taiwan? Currently, the acceptable expectation towards the Taiwanese media workers' westward movement to the PRC seems to be "dual tracks": to co-operate with the PRC and thereby secure its own space (Shang, 2014b). This strategy of dual tracks, which can be understood as, for example, working for the PRC's demands whilst finding space for producing discourses primarily for Taiwanese society, is seen in chapter 5. It hopes for a perfect "golden mean" between the

former and the latter – to “establish its (Taiwanese) own discursive authority” in the realm of culture (Shih, 2007, p.169). Whether working for the PRC or Taiwanese society, the idol drama packagers and other types of cultural producers are encouraged by critical intellectuals to keep their distance from dominant values and to commit to injecting criticality into mass media in Taiwan and the PRC. Post-colonial patriarchal nationalist regimes educate and constrain their people, yet they can be challenged, albeit slowly, by the people. The careers of Taiwanese TV workers, who spend more time in the Chinese production system, is consequently tied to Chinese media ecology.

The PRC also faces complex internal variables extending to its more complex international exchanges with countries like South and North Koreas, Europe, South America, South and Central Asia, Africa and of course the US. For example, Chinese films and TV dramas have been actively co-operating with South Korea – see the discussions in Geng Song (2015, pp.108-113) and Ying Zhu (2008, pp.92-94). They are employing many Taiwanese idol drama producers and actors as representatives of the Chinese side, to co-work with South Korean media industries and stars. Chinese commercial media companies have their own approach to dealing with their authoritarian neo-Confucian regime. Chinese independent and critical film-makers have also learned to become more experienced in playing the game with the Chinese government. If Taiwanese workers are deeply attentive to the concerns of women in the PRC society, their career in the PRC is likely to be lengthened. If they do, they will be closer to the troupe of Chinese artists who counter against the authorities. Certainly, this would be time-consuming. The more familiar they are with PRC society, the more likely they will succeed in dealing with its dominant ideologies. The less familiar they are, the more likely they are to choose safer projects conforming to the mainstream. In an unfamiliar production system, Taiwanese symbolic workers are unlikely to seek narrative breakthrough.

The crisis might be bigger for multiple marginalities in Taiwan because its TV industry, albeit a commercial one, is in crisis. The golden mean mentioned above presumes the existence of a stable Taiwanese symbolic production system, yet whether the mean is being established remains unknown. This golden mean cannot be maintained at all in the long term if Taiwanese society has no stable funding for its domestic TV industry, which then opportunistically makes use of other countries’ markets and production means and is forced to play a cat and mouse game with PRC media censorship. How can media workers balance their careers if one side no longer

exists? Maintaining balance is not easy for agents in a profit-driven environment as the PRC media industry would not primarily care about local issues in Taiwan. Banking simply on migrating workers whose careers are likely to tie in more closely with the PRC system is not practical. If Taiwan has a strong public TV system, this balance can be maintained more easily.

If Taiwan's domestic economic condition keeps worsening, media worker is forced to move to and stay in another place in the long term. Taiwanese people and media workers working with the PRC usually have to face patriotic pressure from Taiwan. The moral predicament of these mobile media workers is whether their shifting from a small Taiwanese stage to a more prosperous PRC stage is ethical. Are these workers abandoning their smaller home? How should they show loyalty to the home? Certainly, these mobile individuals are driven by commercial forces and economic interests. They seemingly are also "forced" to leave the home market in pursuit of better careers and business in a larger market (H.-l. Wang, 2009; Tseng, 2014; 2015). But, as cultural workers, they are unlike working class migrant workers and refugees because they might be more equipped to handle the conundrum and have more flexibility to construct their identities according to their own economic imperatives. Nonetheless the dilemma about "commitment and allegiance to home country and industry" will be hovering in the minds of these individuals, especially well-known media workers, celebrities and stars who get involved with the PRC (and any other new markets in larger countries). Their trouble is different from that of migrant workers and refugees. Their influence and fame will put them in the centre of the public sphere; they eventually must respond to the relay of national politics.

This changing world has made symbolic work in Taiwan and the other parts of the world, a much more difficult task. The mediations of Taiwanese TV drama workers are conditioned by the above political and economic contexts. Either way, the dichotomous spectrum between complicity (or, women's melodrama) and criticality (or, women's film) in various levels of signification remains the guiding principle for cultural criticism. The commercial trade route usually produces works in line with existent discourses and rejects non-mainstream ideas. Most of the time, the latter then is forced, reluctantly, to stay in minor and marginal space. Idol drama is a relatively young medium without much convention established. More workers from art-house cultural productions are turning to the commercial system. One informant (S3) believes that although idol drama began as a copy, it is malleable. Her main concern is how much it can be changed and in what way (S3, personal communication, Jan 25, 2013, p.2). At a public talk held in July 2013, S1 said that she

has been injecting the artistic spirit of the theatre into her subsequent work to change the creative and production atmosphere in idol drama making. These people are competing to win the hearts of audiences with their thoughts. Cultural analysts should capture the negotiation between criticality and complicity to discover forms of (mild and) contextual critiques.

Taiwan maintains the political system of an electoral-democratic country; thus it might not face the same situation as Hong Kong whose political future was determined by two external political powers. The current collective anxiety in Taiwan resulting from the lack of clear political vision is a bit like that in Hong Kong during the early 1980s when political decisions about its future were undecided. Ironically, this unsettling anxiety is a productive and even an enabling soil for critical minds and intellectuals, from a cultural or artistic viewpoint. The key issue about mass media is whether critical signification can slowly flow into mass media productions to change the greater social cultural milieu (consciously and unconsciously). Although Taiwanese political autonomy has institutionally secured the freedom of information and expression despite its vulnerability, how intelligently former variety-show runners and their packaging team members handle the aesthetic, social and political issues mentioned above remains a question. Producer-director Tsai Yueh-Hsun honestly confessed that he and his colleagues were not sufficiently prepared in the early 2000s, in terms of their understanding about markets in the East Asian countries and their production experiences, and as a result their opportunities disappeared quickly over the next three years. He said:

> Jerry Feng, Virginia Liu, me…usually discussed this (producing for East Asian regional markets). But after *Meteor Garden*…the popularity (of idol drama) disappeared in three years. We self criticised and knew that we were not ready and prepared (in terms of our creative and production ability, including how we produce, how to communicate with audience, marketing, understanding the markets). The Taiwanese creators were not ready. Thus our first wave passed quickly. (P2, personal communication, Feb 20, 2013, p.2)

In addition, how much new blood – especially newly joining symbolic workers from the non-mainstream system (directors and writers from public TV system, art-house film-making and theatre) – can change the field of idol drama requires future inquiry. The end results are all connected to the time-consuming accumulation of experience and intelligence of workers in mass media. Continuous engagement with mass media culture in diverse ways is necessary for those hoping to spread ideas from themselves to those who do not belong in the intellectual circle, as Gramsci (1971, p.350) and Stuart Hall (1992, p.268) call for. Nonetheless, criticism is not an end because meanings are ultimately generated by numerous individuals, most of whom are presumably women keeping close or far distances with the identities of “nationals”, “citizens” and

“consumers” in dynamic East Asia (including Taiwan). Although the dramatic imaginations in mass media usually offer us conformist opinions and minimum progress, investigations must continue. This might be the true meaning when it is said that cultural studies’ research on the ambiguous and controversial mass media “remains incomplete” (Hall, 1992, p.272).

# Appendix A. Glossary

| Glossary | Original |
|---|---|
| *12 Chinese Zodiac* | *十二生肖* |
| a dissonance like a square peg in a round hole | 格格不入 |
| *A Terracotta Warrior* | *秦俑* |
| *A Touch of Green* | *一把青* |
| Aaron Yan | 炎亞綸 |
| aim too high but accomplish little because of little talent | 眼高手低 |
| *Alice in Wonder City* | *給愛麗絲的奇蹟* |
| *All about Eve* | *이브의 모든 것* |
| *Amor de Tarapaca* | *紫藤戀* |
| Andy Hui | 許志安 |
| Angie Chai | 柴智屏 |
| Anhui Broadcasting System | 安徽廣播電視 |
| Anti-Secession Law | 反分裂國家法 |
| *Asian Trilogy* | *亞洲三部曲* |
| Asia-Pacific Regional Operations Centre | 亞太營運中心計劃 |
| *Asunaro White Paper* | *あすなろ白書* |
| Atari Kousuke | 中孝介 |
| Azio TV | 東風衛星電視台 |
| Barbie Hsu | 徐熙媛 |
| bases in Taiwan, aiming at all entertainment-related business in Asia, to ultimately worldwide | 立足台灣，放眼亞洲，進軍世界 |
| *Because of You* | *星光下的童話* |
| Beijing Hualubaina Film & TV Company Ltd. | 北京華錄百納影視股份有限公司 |
| *benshengren* | 本省人 |
| *Black and White* | *痞子英雄* |
| Bo-Shin Japan Channel | 博新日本台 |
| *Boys Over Flowers* | *花より男子* |
| *Bright Girl's Success* | *명랑소녀 성공기* |
| Butokuden | 武德殿 |
| Cable Radio and Television Act | 有線電視法 |
| *Calling for Love* | *呼叫大明星* |
| Calvin Chen | 辰亦儒 |
| *Cape No. 7* | *海角七號* |
| Chang Man-Ling | 章曼玲 |
| Chao Shen-Shen | 趙深深 |
| Chen Cheng-Kung | 陳成功 |
| Chen Hai-Chieh | 陳海傑 |
| Chen I-Chun | 陳一俊 |
| Chen Li-Chun | 陳麗君 |
| Chen Shui-Bian | 陳水扁 |
| Chi Wei-Yi | 戚偉易 |
| Chin Cheng-Tian | 金承天 |
| China Entertainment Satellite TV | 华娱卫视 |
| China Television Company | 中國電視公司 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Chinese Communist Party | 中國共產黨 |
| Chinese Television System | 中華電視公司 |
| Chinese-language Wave | 華流 |
| Choi Si Won | 최 시 원 |
| *Chong Hui Huai Bao* | *重回懷抱* |
| *Chrysanthemum's Spring* | *小菊的春天* |
| Chu Ja-Hyun | 추 자 현 |
| Chu Yen-Ping | 朱延平 |
| Chu Yu-Ning | 瞿友寧 |
| Chun Long International Entertainment Co. | 群龍國際影視娛樂有限公司 |
| Chung Tian Satellite TV Station | 中天衛星電視公司 |
| *City of Sky* | *天空之城* |
| CNplus Production Co. | 黑劍電視節目製作股份有限公司 |
| *Come to My Family* | *來我家吧* |
| Comic International Production Co. Ltd. | 可米國際影視事業股份有限公司 |
| Comic Ritz Production Co. Ltd. | 可米瑞智國際藝能有限公司 |
| connecting with the international | 接軌國際 |
| *Corner with Love* | *轉角遇到愛* |
| *Crying out Love, in the Centre of the World* | *世界の中心で、愛をさけぶ* |
| Da-Ai TV | 大愛電視 |
| *Dae Jang Geum* | *대 장 금* |
| Dafang Entertainment Production Co. | 大方影像製作股份有限公司 |
| Democratic Progressive Party | 民主進步黨 |
| Department of Publicity | 中國共產黨中央宣傳部 |
| *Die Sterntaler* | *白色之戀* |
| doing good deeds before it is too late | 及時行善 |
| Domani Production | 多曼尼製作有限公司 |
| *Down with Love* | *就想賴著妳* |
| Doze Niu | 紐承澤 |
| *Dream Lover* | *夢中人* |
| *Dreams Link* | *又見一簾幽夢* |
| Eastern Shine Production Co. | 東映製作公司 |
| Economic Co-operation Framework Agreement | 兩岸經濟合作架構協議 |
| Eddie Peng | 彭于晏 |
| *Emerald on the Roof* | *屋頂上的綠寶石* |
| *Endless Love* | *愛無限* |
| *Extravagant Challenge* | *華麗的挑戰* |
| *Fabulous Boy* | *原來是美男* |
| Fahrenheit | 飛輪海 |
| Fang Jianjun | 方建軍 |
| Fang Lei | 方磊 |
| Fang Ying | 方瑩 |
| *Fated to Love You* | *命中注定我愛你* |
| *Fathers' War* | *門當父不對 aka 老爸駕到* |
| *Five Hundred Years of Regret* | *恨五百年* |
| *Fondant Garden* | *翻糖花園* |
| Formosa Television Inc. | 民間全民電視公司 |
| *Formula 17* | *十七歲的天空* |
| Fort Provintia | 赤崁樓 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Four Happiness House | 四喜院 |
| Fruit Chan | 陳果 |
| Fuji TV | フジテレビ |
| Fujioka Dean | 藤岡靛 |
| Fukuyama Masaharu | 福山雅治 |
| *Full House* | *풀 하 우 스* |
| Fulong Production Co. | 福隆製作公司 |
| Gala TV Station | 八大電視公司 |
| *Gangster's Bakery* | *流氓蛋糕店* |
| Gao Min | 高明 |
| Ge Fu-Hong | 葛福鴻 |
| Gold-Sun TV Channel | 國興衛視 |
| Governmental Information Office | 中華民國行政院新聞局 |
| Gu Hye Seon | 구 혜 선 |
| Hakka | 客家話/客家人 |
| *Happy & Love Forever* | *幸福一定強* |
| Hatanaka Tatsuro | 畠中達郎 |
| He Ting-Yu | 賀霆宇 |
| *Hi My Dear* | *嗨！親愛的* |
| *Hi My Sweetheart* | *海派甜心* |
| Hiraoka Yuta | 平岡祐太 |
| Hokkien | 閩南語 |
| Hoklo | 閩南人 |
| *Home* | *回家 aka 彼岸 1945* |
| *Honey and Clover* | *蜂蜜幸運草* |
| Honto Production | 紅豆製作股份有限公司 |
| Hou Wen-yong | 侯文詠 |
| Hu Jintao | 胡錦濤 |
| Hua-Ce Media Company | 華策影視 |
| Huang Song | 黃崧 |
| Huaqiao | 華僑 |
| Hunan Broadcasting System | 湖南廣播電視 |
| *I Am Sorry I love you* | *미 안 하 다 사 랑 한 다* |
| Ichige Rumiko | 市毛琉美子 |
| *In Time with You* | *我可能不會愛你* |
| Indigenous people | 原住民 |
| *It started with a Kiss* | *惡作劇之吻* |
| *It Takes Two to Tango* | *車拚* |
| Ito Seiko | 伊藤聖子 |
| *IUUI* | *我愛你愛你愛我* |
| Jackie Chan | 成龍 |
| Jerry Feng | 馮家瑞 |
| Jerry Yan | 言承旭 |
| Ji Mi | 幾米 |
| Jian Man-Shu | 簡嫚書 |
| Joanne Tseng | 曾之喬 |
| Joseph Cheng | 鄭元暢 |
| *Just Give Me a Call* | *麻雀愛上鳳凰* |
| Kabukicho | 歌舞伎町 |
| Kamio Yoko | 神尾 葉子 |
| Kaneshiro Takeshi | 金城武 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Kansai TV | 関西テレビ |
| Ken Chu | 朱孝天 |
| Kim Seong Nyeol | 金成烈 |
| Kim So-Yeon | 김 소 연 |
| King Hu | 胡金銓 |
| Kitamura Toyoharu | 北村豐晴 |
| *Knock Knock Loving You* | *敲敲愛上你* |
| Kubonouchi Eisaku | 窪之内英策 |
| Kuomintang, Chinese Nationalist Party | 中國國民黨 |
| *Lavender* | *薰衣草* |
| Lee Dong Hae | 이 동 해 |
| *Legend of the Mountains* | *山中傳奇* |
| *Letter 1949* | *我在 1949 等你* |
| Li Chih-Chiang | 李志薔 |
| Li Hsing | 李行 |
| Lin Chi-Ling | 林志玲 |
| Lin Jung-San | 林榮三 |
| Lin Kung-Hai | 林崑海 |
| Ling Xiao-Su | 凌蕭肅 |
| Lisa King | 金莉莎 |
| Liu Cheng-Wei | 劉城偉 |
| *Love and Farewell* | *愛情與離別* |
| *Love at Aegean Sea* | *情定愛琴海* |
| *Love Now* | *真愛趁現在* |
| *Love or Bread* | *我的億萬麵包* |
| *Love Textbook* | *戀愛講義* |
| Ma Ru-Lon | 馬如龍 |
| Mag Hsu | 徐譽庭 |
| *Mars* | *戰神* |
| martial law | 戒嚴法 |
| *Material Queen* | *拜金女王* |
| Mayday | 五月天 |
| Medialink Entertainment Ltd. | 羚邦動畫（國際）有限公司 |
| *Meteor Garden* | *流星花園* |
| *Michael's Dance* | *米迦勒之舞* |
| Michelle Saram/Zheng Xue-Er | 鄭雪兒 |
| *Midnight Restaurant* | *深夜食堂* |
| Miike Takashi | 三池崇史 |
| *Miss No Good* | *不良笑花* |
| *My Combat Butler* | *旋風管家* |
| *My Perfect Boyfriend* | *絕對達令* |
| Nagasawa Masami | 長澤まさみ |
| National Communications Commission | 國家通訊傳播委員會 |
| neither fish nor fowl | 四不像 |
| New Asian projects of Chinese-language film and television | 亞洲華語影視新計畫 |
| Nine Chang | 張鈞甯 |
| *Once Upon a Time in Beitou* | *熱海戀歌* |
| One Country, Two Systems | 一國兩制 |
| operation at international or regional scale | 國際經營 |
| ouxiangju | 偶像劇 |
| Pai Hsien-Yung | 白先勇 |

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|---|---|
| Pang Ho-cheung | 彭浩翔 |
| Park Eun-Hye | 박 은 혜 |
| Park Jung-Min | 박 정 민 |
| Park Shin Hye | 박 신 혜 |
| Peggy Ko | 柯宜勤 |
| People's Republic of China | 中華人民共和國 |
| Peter Ho-Sun Chan | 陳可辛 |
| Power Generation Entertainment Co. Ltd. | 星勢力娛樂股份有限公司 |
| Prajna Works Entertainment Co. Ltd. | 普拉嘉國際意像影藝股份有限公司 |
| Pu Cheng-Chun | 朴成俊 |
| Public Television Service | 公共電視台 |
| *Pure in My Heart* | *열 아 홉 순 정* |
| *Queen of SOP* | *SOP 女王* aka *勝女的代價* |
| Radio and Television Act | 廣播電視法 |
| *Raining in the Mountain* | *空山靈雨* |
| *Rainy Dog* | *極道黑社会* |
| reincarnation between previous and current lives | 前世今生 |
| Republic of China | 中華民國 |
| Saimon Fumi | 柴門ふみ |
| Sanlih Entertainment Television Company | 三立電視公司 |
| Satellite Broadcasting Act | 衛星廣播電視法 |
| *Say Yes Enterprise* | *求婚事務所* |
| *Scent of Chrysanthemum* | *국 화 꽃 향 기* |
| *Scent of Love* | *戀香* |
| *Shadows of Love* | *影子愛人* |
| Shanghai Dragon Satellite TV | 上海東方衛視 |
| Shanghai Yiaoxingying Media Company | 上海曜新穎影視製作公司 |
| Sharon Mao | 毛訓容 |
| Shen Yi | 沈怡 |
| Shenzhen Broadcasting System | 深圳廣播電視集團 |
| *Shinjuku Triad Society* | *新宿黑社会* |
| *Silence* | *深情密碼* |
| *Sleepless Town* | *不夜城* |
| Song Qian | 宋茜 |
| *Spring Love* | *美人龍湯* |
| *Starlit* | *心星的淚光* |
| *Starry Starry Night* | *雪地裡的星星* |
| State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television | 中華人民共和國國家新聞出版廣播電影電視總局 |
| *Stealing Heart* | *偷心* aka *天若有情* |
| Sumitomo Trading Co., Ltd | 住友商事 |
| *Sunny Girl* | *陽光天使* |
| *Sunny Happiness* | *幸福最晴天* |
| *Super Sunday* | *超級星期天* |
| *Swallowtail* | *スワロウテイル* |
| *Sweet Relationship* | *美味關係* |
| Tainan Confucius Temple | 台南孔廟 |
| Taipei Film Commission | 台北市電影委員會 |
| Taipei International Flora Exposition | 台北國際花卉博覽會 |
| Tai-phoon | 台風 |
| Taiwan Broadcasting System | 台灣公共廣播集團 |

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|---|---|
| Taiwan New Cinema | 台灣新電影 |
| Taiwan Original Filmmakers Union | 電影創作聯盟 |
| Taiwan Television Company | 台灣電視公司 |
| Taiwanese Wave | 台流 |
| Taiwanese-Korean Trilogy | 中韓三部曲 |
| Tanaka Chie | 田中千絵 |
| Tatsumi Chie | 辰巳千惠 |
| Television Broadcasts Satellite TV | 無線衛星電視台 |
| Teresa Li-Chun Teng | 鄧麗君 |
| Terry Hu (Hu Yin-Meng) | 胡茵夢 |
| The Fourth Channel | 第四台 |
| The Old Three | 老三台 |
| *The Reincarnation of Golden Lotus* | *潘金蓮的前世今生* |
| *The Rose* | *薔薇之戀* |
| *Three* | *三更* |
| *To the Fore* | *破風* |
| *Tomorrow* | *愛情白皮書* |
| traitor | 漢奸 |
| Tsai Eng-Meng | 蔡衍明 |
| Tsai Yueh-Hsun | 蔡岳勳 |
| Tsang Tsui-Shan | 曾翠珊 |
| Tsao Jui-Yuan | 曹瑞原 |
| *Turn Right Turn Left* | *向左走向右走* |
| Vanness Wu | 吳建豪 |
| Vic Chou | 周渝民 |
| Videoland Japan Channel | 緯來日本台 |
| Virginia Liu | 劉瑋慈 |
| *waishengren*/mainlanders | 外省人 |
| Wan Ren | 萬仁 |
| *Wayward Kenting* | *我在墾丁天氣晴* |
| *When Love Walked In* | *愛情闖進門* |
| *White Tower* | *白色巨塔* |
| *White Tower* | *白い巨塔* |
| *Winter Sonata* | *겨울연가* |
| Wu Lo-Ying | 吳洛纓 |
| Yeh Yu-Ping Michelle | 葉育萍 |
| Yin Hsiang-Chih | 尹香之 |
| Yi-Yuan Production House | 一元製作室 |
| *You Light up My Star* | *你照亮我星球* |
| zhizuoren | 製作人 |
| Zhou Mi | 周覓 |

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